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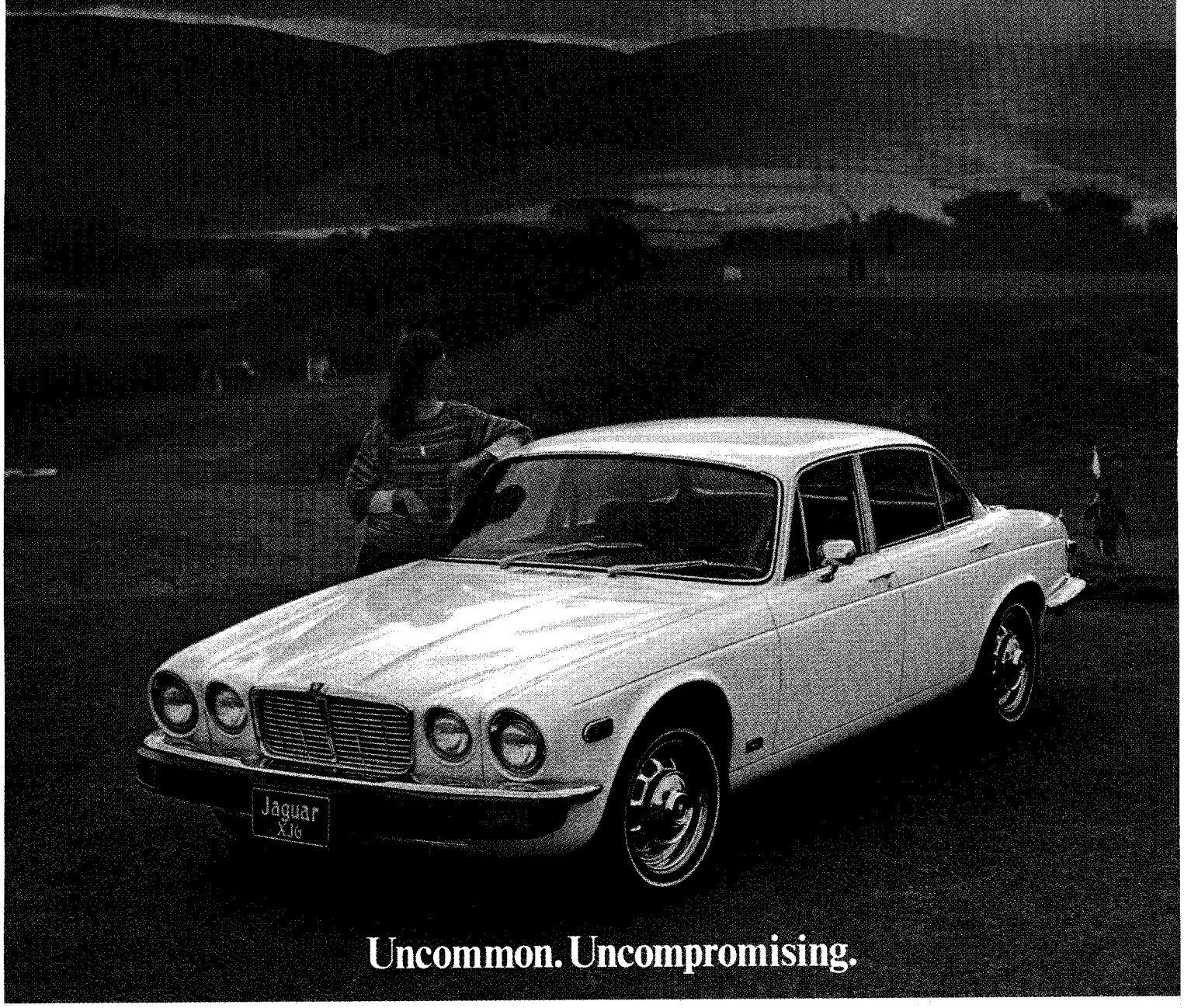

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TRB

from Washington
October 21, 1978

Scoop

I wish I had been running a newspaper 75 years ago. I would have sent a reporter—no, I would have hurried myself—to one of the wildest and most inaccessible spots on the continent, on the North Carolina coast in fact, with a hundred miles of frothing surf and skittering sand crabs. Seventy-five years ago? That was 1903 and in Washington the gusto of Teddy Roosevelt and his ability to dramatize himself and coin phrases were keeping the city in an uproar. The place I would have gone to was Kitty Hawk; as a matter of fact, Kill Devil Hill, where a couple of bicycle mechanics named Wright, sons of a bishop—Wilbur and Orville Wright—were getting ready to fly.

It was, beyond doubt, the most oddly covered story in modern journalism. From the caveman on, humans had looked at birds and wanted to fly. And 75 years ago the brothers did it. There was no reporter present, but a second-hand report got into *The Virginia Pilot* at Norfolk. The flight was December 17, and the story appeared the next day. It carried a 2-bank, 7-column headline across page one:

Flying Machine Soars 3 Miles in Teeth of High Wind Over/Sand Hills and Waves at Kittyhawk on Carolina Coast/No Balloon Attached to Aid It

The headline was untrue in these particulars. It wasn't over waves; it didn't fly three miles. The reporter wasn't there. It actually flew 852 feet, about the length of a modern flat-top, and the time was 59 seconds. One thing, however, was true: it was unique; a self-propelled, heavier-than-air machine carried a man. Daedalus had arrived. Did it get worldwide attention? It did not. The Wrights did not mind. Months passed; years passed; they repeated the flights again and again, made turns, then the first circle, constantly extended the distance. Newspapers yawned.

Even now it is a little hard to understand, yet the explanation is plausible enough. The world knew man couldn't fly and, in addition, it had used up all its credibility on the spectacular failure of Samuel P. Langley. He got a $50,000 War Department subsidy and on October 7, 1903, made the first of two attempts. It was at Widewater, Virginia, where the Potomac broadens into a kind of bay. His pilot, Charles Manly, started his craft down a 70-foot runway mounted on top of a houseboat. It got its initial thrust from tightly coiled springs. Boats of reporters had waited for this moment for two months. A skyrocket signaled, tugs tooted; the plane tumbled off the end of the houseboat and sank in 60 feet. A second one sank on December 8.

You could hear the guffaws from coast to coast. Every cynic who knew man couldn't fly rejoiced. There was probably something about it in the Bible. The failure was exhilarating. *The Washington Star* thought it funny. *The Washington Post* gloated, "Buzzard a Wreck." *The New York Sun* was cute: "Langley's Aerodrome Swoops into Potomac/And Ducks Professor Manly/Aerodrome Did a Flipflop/Then Turned Its Nose Up, and Went Into Potomac/Mr. Manly Had a Bath with It." Langley, the great Smithsonian scientist, was crushed by the failure; he died two years later, his end hastened by humiliation.

What editor wanted a story from Kitty Hawk nine days after the second Langley plane failure in Washington? The self-centered Wrights didn't demand attention; they avoided it. Let the world beat a path to their door for the better mousetrap. The world didn't move. Most newspapers spiked the query offered them from the *Virginia Pilot*.

But you can't hide the discovery of human heavier-than-air flight from enterprising American journalism for long; not for more than a year or two. Seventy-five years ago the Wrights dismantled their machine and sent it back to Dayton in "two boxes and a barrel." They came back next year, and the next. Reports filtered over to France from US scientific and Army circles of interesting experiments. France was almost hysterical about balloonists and gliders. The French Aero Club cabled excitedly to find out. By this time the Wrights had an engine and a plane that didn't need the stiff winds and sand dunes of Kitty Hawk for launching. They had permission to use a field outside of Dayton. The Aero Club's representative came to Dayton in December, 1905—two years after the first flight. He interviewed the Wrights—two calm, dignified, unemotional men in their 30s, four years apart in age, whose education finished with high school, men of self-evident probity. It wasn't just the word of the Wright brothers, either. A local farmer had watched them; as the airplane appeared while he was cutting corn (in Ohio, that is) he remarked to his hired man, "Well, the boys are at it again!" What did the farmer do? cried the excited French representative. "I just kept on shucking corn," the farmer said. When the Paris Aero Club got the news there was almost a riot.

No, you can't hide things from the alert US press for long. In 1908 the Wrights were back at Kitty Hawk again and a roving reporter from the Norfolk *Landmark*, D. Bruce Salley, who was also a stringer for the New York *Herald*, sent a story (May 7, 1908) saying he had seen it with his own eyes: 1000 feet, 60 feet above the ground. The *Herald* low-keyed the piece, sent down its own high-power correspondent who was joined by four other diverse correspondents on the way south. (The trip took two days.) From a hiding place they saw the thing start, they heard the clacking propeller like a kind of grain reaper, they saw the white wings rise and glisten in the morning sun, they saw it take off—the darn thing was flying!—go down, turn, come back: they were so beside themselves they stood up from their hiding place, and then raced back to Manteo (home of the "Lost Colony") to tell the world.

I have only one bit to add to the story. I went along with the official party, 25 years after the flight, accompanying Orville, the remaining brother, to Kill Devil Hill to dedicate the site. We sailed down the Potomac overnight with a party that Silent Cal had appointed. The only trouble was that Kill Devil Hill wasn't there. It was a walking hill. The configuration was all different.

Sea winds work on the dunes—all the time. Orville told me he didn't know where it was precisely. It was put up to a couple of local gaffers, who reached a verdict before the third one arrived. I remember the stern look the tardy one got, daring him to dissent. He went along, and the inspiring monument and museum are there today. (What it needs, though, is a plaque to alert American journalism.)

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Cover: Hannah Arendt in 1969.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

October 21, 1978

News From Nowhere

Early in this century, all foreign news sent to the United States and American news transmitted to the rest of the world was controlled by a European cartel run by the British news agency, Reuters, and the French Havas and German Wolff agencies. According to Kent Cooper, executive manager of the Associated Press back then and a battler against the cartel, "Reuters decided what news was to be sent from America. It told the world about Indians on the war path in the West, lynchings in the South and bizarre crimes in the North. The charge for decades was that nothing creditable to America ever was sent." At the same time, Cooper recalled, "their own countries were always glorified. This was done by reporting great advances at home in English and French civilizations, the benefits of which would, of course, be bestowed upon the world."

Nearly 50 years after the cracking of the cartel, the European monopoly on American news, two American agencies, the AP and UPI, plus Reuter and Agence France Presse, are accused of similarly dominating news disseminated to and about the Third World. The charge is made most combatively in a document entitled "The New World Information Order" which will be considered (and possibly voted upon) at the general conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) later this month in Paris. According to this document, 80 percent of the news that circulates through the world comes from "the big transnational agencies," but "these allocate only about 20 or 30 percent of their news to the developing countries although the latter represent almost three quarters of the whole of humanity. This means a veritable monopoly on the part of the developed countries, to their own advantages."

The document charges that what the world knows about developing countries, and vice versa, is controlled by the "transnationals" and "distorted" by them according to their national biases. "When they take notice at all" of what is happening in a particular country, the agencies "often show [it] in the most unfavorable light, stressing crises, strikes, street demonstrations, putsches, etc., or even holding them up to ridicule."

It is pretty hard to argue with the accusation. The American media have a tendency to treat the third world like the freak show at a country fair. They downplay what serious leaders like Felix Houphouet-Boigny or Julius Nyerere might be doing, well or badly, to feed their people and modernize their countries; the third world's best-known figure among American audiences is the butcher-buffoon, Idi Amin. Americans once resented having their country portrayed abroad as little more than home to Al Capone. It's easy to imagine how much more, given their recent colonial past and their undeniable underdevelopment, it must gall Africans, Asians and Latin Americans to have their countries represented only as sites of famine, earthquakes and military coups. Africans react bitterly, and rightly so, when the western media report on a massacre in Zaire only in terms of white casualties, and ignore the more numerous black dead.

The third world is striking back in some ways that are useful and some that are dangerous. Sometimes it has been hard for Americans to tell which is which. For example, the first suggestions by non-aligned countries that they develop a "news pool" were greeted with horror in the US. So was the very idea of "development journalism" as an alternative to the western kind. Both devices, their critics claimed, would inevitably be dominated by the governments involved and used to maintain their own power at home and to spread propaganda about themselves abroad. The greatest fear is that third-world countries would develop alternative information channels and then exclude the Western news agencies from their countries. However, Yugoslavia has been running a non-aligned news pool for five years now without noticeable ill-effect (or influence, either). Lately, it's been suggested that the

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West should help the third world to create a "development news service" or even a third world news service, with correspondents all over the world, that would compete with AP, UPI and the others. This would be a move comparable to AP's appearance to end the old Reuter cartel.

A more disturbing development is the frankly statist attitude toward information that is embodied in many proposals for a "new order" of things. The most outrageous of all, characteristically, come from the Soviet Union, which has proposed language declaring that "states are responsible for the activities in the international sphere of all mass media under their jurisdiction." If adopted, such language would give moral authority for any countries which want to regulate, harrass or ban international news organizations, as the Soviets and their satellites do. So far, the Soviet position has not been adopted in any world declaration, but it has caused stormy debate in UNESCO meetings and elsewhere.

Documents to be considered at the UNESCO meeting in Paris have aroused alarm at Freedom House and other US organizations dedicated to unbridled freedom of the press. These groups find it objectionable in principle that international organizations should assign any role to governments in running or regulating information flow, and they seem to want US delegates in Paris to wage uncompromising battle against any suggestions of the kind. But there are good reasons why the Americans should pick and choose their battlegrounds carefully.

It is inevitable that governments in underdeveloped countries will be heavily involved in information policy. Their economies are not prosperous enough to generate advertising to support privately-owned media. Most western European countries, even though economically advanced, have state-owned televisions stations, and British viewers of rival channels on the BBC enjoy more cultural diversity than Americans who flip between our privately-owned networks.

Some parts of the UNESCO documents are particularly offensive and should be opposed especially vigorously by US delegates. One would authorize "regulation of the right to information by preventing abusive uses of the right of access to information"—a provision that would seem to sanction limits on the right of foreign correspondents to travel, conduct interviews and witness events. Another provides for legal sanctions when countries feel they are victims of distorted coverage. These are efforts at information control and censorship-by-intimidation which, if practiced, will only damage the credibility of news emanating from any country that institutes them.

Some of these issues are worth quarreling over as matters of principle and precedent, but it's comforting to remember that UNESCO's declarations have no binding effect.

UNESCO, being essentially a powerless body, is a perfect setting for rancor. Third world militants can be as provocative as they want to be. They, with the Soviet Union's assistance, will try to portray Western news organizations as neo-colonialist and practitioners of cultural imperialism. There will be a distinct Marxist flavor to the rhetoric, linking Western communications "hegemony" to economic domination of the third world by the industrialized nations. "Transnationals" in news will be made out to be the partners of "multinationals" in commerce, and both will be made out to be equally bad.

In Paris, we should make clear again our commitment to the full flow of information. And that should impel western news agencies and U.S. media to redress the justified grievance third worlders have about reportage from their areas of the world.

Rhodesians die for your sins.

Killing for Christ

The burdens on Christians in this vale of tears are numerous and oppressive. Among the heaviest crosses Protestants in particular are required to bear are the errors of the World Council of Churches. Unable to stamp out original sin, the WCC has provided outlets for its institutional expression, mostly through its controversial Programme to Combat Racism, which in August announced a donation of $85,000 to the two guerrilla organizations which make up the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia). The grants came from a special fund established in 1969, which in eight years has given $2.6 million to "movements of the racially oppressed" in eight countries, including the United States.

The grant came shortly before the Patriotic Front claimed responsibility for shooting down an unarmed Air Rhodesia airliner carrying civilians. The guerrillas implausibly denied taking part in the subsequent massacre of those passengers who survived the crash. Other atrocities committed by the Patriotic Front (the Ian Smith government has an equal list to its credit) include several massacres of Christian missionaries. In one episode last June, eight missionaries and four children were beaten to death. The terror campaign against Christian missionaries—some of whom are financed in part by the World Council of Churches—is part of a deliberate policy intended to drive whites from Rhodesia. Patriotic Front guerrillas have murdered 33 missionaries and their children in the last two years.

The Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) grew out of the "theologies of liberation" that appeared during the 1960s, which inventively portray Jesus of Nazareth as hardly more than an early-day Che Guevara. The PCR finds its support in an alliance of Western liberals

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and aggressively radical third-world Protestants, mostly from Africa and Asia. As is usual in such coalitions, the money for the PCR comes mostly from affluent whites, but its spending is controlled by poor non-whites. Most of the PCR's funds have come from the Netherlands, Sweden, West Germany and the United States (including government donations from the first two). More than half of all American contributions to the WCC are made by two fashionably liberal denominations—the United Methodist Church and the United Presbyterian Church (of which I am a member). The PCR has aided several other "liberation" movements in Africa. Last year recipients included the African National Congress, a guerrilla group in South Africa ($50,000), and the South-West Africa People's Organization ($85,000).

The grant to the Patriotic Front ignited a firestorm of protest from Protestant clergy and laymen, illuminating the gulf between the World Council and its ostensible constituency. The Salvation Army said it was "perplexed and distressed" by the PCR's action and suspended its membership in the WCC. Christian Aid, the relief division of the British Council of Churches, publicly dissociated itself from the contribution. The Christian Century, a liberal ecumenicist magazine, characterized those who made the grant as "armchair guerrillas, vicarious doers of violence." The Presbyterian Lay Committee, composed of members of United Presbyterian churches, accused the WCC of "subsidizing murderers" and urged the church to sever its ties with the world organization.

Apparently the World Council, which has been giving these grants for eight years without getting much attention, was surprised by the reaction to this one. It prepared a fact sheet explaining the reasons behind the donation; member denominations did likewise, urging ministers to defend it. Clearly, however, the Council, which has long been unpopular among many Protestants, doesn't take the protest very seriously. Bruno Kroker, a spokesman for the Council, blames the reaction mostly on "misinformation" spread by "hate-mongering journalists."

The most revealing defense of the WCC grants to guerillas came in a background paper prepared by the United Presbyterian Church and distributed to its ministers. It is an extraordinary document—condescending, dogmatic, laced with street-corner Marxist rhetoric. The PCR money is intended, says the paper, to "raise the level of awareness . . . of the oppressed people" and represent "an expression of commitment to the cause of economic, social and political justice." The interesting part follows: a question-and-answer section intended to refute criticisms of the grant. Here the Church alternates, as the occasion demands, between innocently describing the money as merely a "humanitarian" grant (in theory, it is supposed to be spent only for medical supplies, education and other innocuous purposes) and aligning itself unequivocally with the cause of the guerrillas. "The WCC does not endorse violence any more than a padre endorses the bullets of the soldier he serves," the paper says at one point. Later, however, it makes a point to "affirm our belief in their [the Patriotic Front's] cause, and in the good faith and responsibility of the people concerned."

The claim that the grant is merely for humanitarian purposes is transparently absurd. There is no reason to believe the Patriotic Front makes any effort to meet with this requirement. Guerrillas fighting a war do not fastidiously divide up their funds between military and non-military purposes, much less by the source of the money. Not only has the World Council no way to see that its funds are spent only for nonviolent purposes, it has no interest in doing so. "Grants are made," says the paper, "without control of the manner in which they are spent. . . ." What guarantee does the Church have that the money will be spent properly? "The same guarantee we have from more than 120 other groups that the PCR has supported since 1970 in their educational and humanitarian work," says the Church, unctuously. In other words, no guarantee at all. This policy was explained some time ago by WCC General Secretary Philip Potter, who felt "there could be no real sense of solidarity with people if you did not trust them." Perhaps the Presbyterian Church's attitude on this matter is merely highly naive, as no doubt it is intended to sound; more likely it represents a thoroughly cynical way of abdicating its moral responsibility and deluding its parishoners.

"The WCC's own commitment to non-violent change is clear," the paper says—and, one might add, utterly meaningless, since many of the groups it helps are unapologetically violent. This commitment, in any case, "doesn't mean it must desert those in need of humanitarian support when their struggle turns violent." Note the careful sentence construction, which suggests that the violence of the struggle is beyond the control of the guerrillas. Well, as a matter of fact, struggles don't turn violent; people do. Sometimes they may be justified in doing so; but this kind of subtlety is not dealt with by the WCC.

And what about those massacres of Christian missionaries? The Presbyterian paper neatly dodges the question of whether the WCC is paying for the murder of its own representatives in Rhodesia. It suggests that the missionaries may have been killed by government forces disguised as guerrillas and then goes on to say the atrocities aren't very important anyway. "The mathematics of tragedy," it says blithely, "will get us nowhere." In any event, says the Church, no one ever mentions the "hundreds killed by Smith's forces invading Mozambique or the *savagery of the propaganda war*" (emphasis added). This is an ingenious defense, but not quite as clever as one offered last year by Canon Burgess Carr, head of the All Africa

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Conference of Churches, who said that guerrilla groups like the Patriotic Front "have helped the Church to rediscover a new and radical appreciation of the Cross. In accepting the violence of the Cross, God in Jesus Christ sanctified violence into a redemptive instrument for bringing into being a fuller human life." Surely the Gospel has never been interpreted this way before. By its logic, the worthy subject of worship is not Jesus but those who enabled him to "sanctify violence" by nailing him up.

The Presbyterian Church's background paper is at pains to explain that the WCC made the grant to express its disapproval of the internal agreement negotiated between Smith and several moderate black nationalists. The Carter administration has refused to endorse the agreement for a pragmatic reason: the Patriotic Front has refused to participate in it, and any government that lacks the participation of the Patriotic Front will have trouble commanding sufficient popular support to have a chance of survival. But the flaws in the internal agreement are no reason to endorse the Patriotic Front. Even the United States and Britain, which have rejected the settlement, haven't contemplated providing active support to the guerrillas. Aside from the Patriotic Front's atrocities, one has every reason to feel uneasy about what kind of government it would establish, given the opportunity. Robert Mugabe, leader of the more radical Zimbabwe African National Union, is from all evidence a thorough-going Marxist who intends to establish a Communist-style "revolutionary state." The WCC is blasé about this prospect. Bruno Kroker admits it's possible that a Patriotic Front victory might lead to a dictatorship, but says any predictions are "pure speculation." He goes on fatuously, "The World Council can't go on record as subscribing to the entire program of the Patriotic Front, because we don't know what it is." In giving money to the Patriotic Front, the WCC has gone well beyond rejection of the internal agreement to actually endorse both the guerrillas' violent course and their political intentions.

In 1975 and 1976 the Programme to Combat Racism gave $110,000 to Bishop Abel Muzorewa and the Reverend Ndabaninghi Sithole. Now that they have joined a coalition with Ian Smith, the World Council of Churches has disowned them. In giving money to guerrillas, the WCC contends that it is helping oppressed peoples without submitting them to an ideological test. But now these two black leaders, who still presumably represent the same oppressed people, have become anathema only because they've made political decisions the WCC disagrees with. Tactical compromises are grounds for disqualification; murdering missionaries is not.

Today there are three outside parties helping the guerrillas in Rhodesia: the Soviet Union, Cuba and the World Council of Churches. The Russians and Cubans are supporting the Patriotic Front out of ideological sympathy and their own strategic interests. They don't object to employing violence to bring about what they have in mind. The World Council is supporting the guerrillas because it doesn't like white supremacy, and because it feels a definite ideological affinity. It also doesn't seem to object to the violence; it doesn't even seem to object to the murder of Christian missionaries. If anyone should complain, as many Protestants have, that any church organization with such views should choose between Christianity and Marxism, one can only answer that the WCC and its apologists in the United Presbyterian Church have made their choice very clear.

Stephen Chapman

Stephen Chapman is a Washington writer.

White House Watch

Upward Bound

At the ninth in a series of private dinners that Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter have been giving in their family quarters at the White House for small groups of news executives, columnists, broadcasters and their spouses, David Hartman of ABC asked the President a question that some of the guests thought tactless and brutal. It went about as follows: "Why are we here and what do you expect to get out of it?" The President was turning the question aside with a mild and inconclusive answer when Rosalynn jumped in. The guests understood, although they were never so instructed, that nothing the Carters said at the dinner was to be quoted. But anybody who has discussed the President's media relationships and problems with Mrs. Carter, as I have, will know that she answered pretty much like this:

Giving the dinners was her idea (not image engineer Gerald Rafshoon's, be it noted). She had felt since Jimmy took office that the media did not adequately understand and reflect him and what he was trying to accomplish. Having in people like that night's guests—Hartman, Max Lerner, Elizabeth Drew, Marquis Childs, Richard Strout, Anthony Day, Tom Brokaw—was a way of cultivating better understanding and more appreciation. This she would have said or indicated without overt complaint but with an undertone of hurt and resentment that her Jimmy shares but seldom or never expresses as candidly as she does.

The dinner sessions are having some of the effect that Rosalynn intends and some that she did not intend. They have contributed to the prevailing sense that Jimmy Carter is upward bound from his recent lows.

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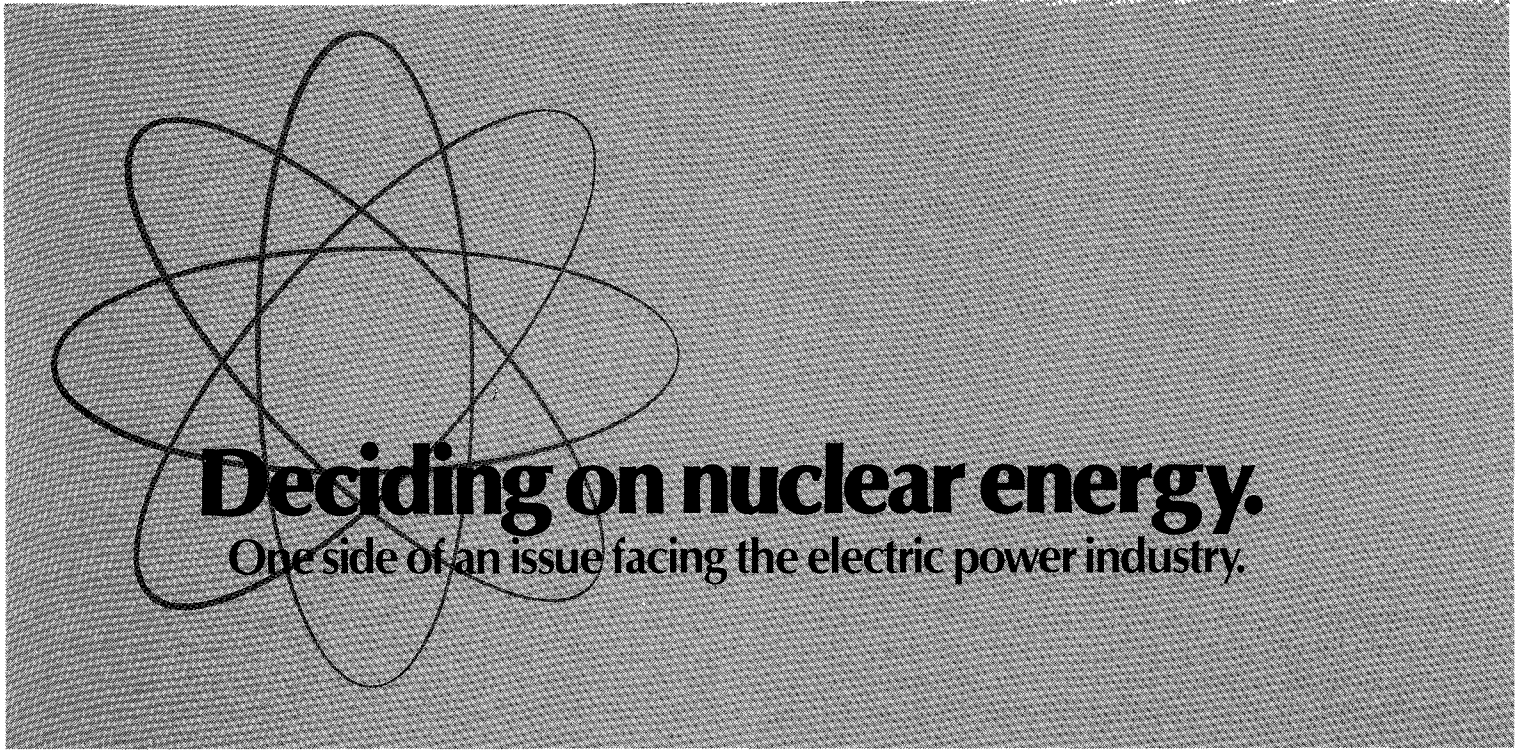

Deciding on nuclear energy.

One side of an issue facing the electric power industry.

Nuclear power is not the energy form of the future. It is very much a part of the present. And important national decisions must be made if it is to continue to make its contribution to energy supply.

Nuclear plants have been generating electricity commercially in the U.S. since 1957. Today, 71 plants provide 12% of this country's electricity—about as much as we get from hydro-electric dams, more than *all* electric power generated in the country in 1946. In some areas, most of the electricity people use is nuclear. 95 more nuclear stations are now under construction. The number of countries with nuclear power programs is now 53.

A clean record

Nuclear generation of electricity has grown because of its safety, reliability and economy. No other industry started with a greater appreciation of potential hazards. None is operated under more stringent occupational and environmental safeguards.

The American Medical Association's Council on Scientific Affairs recently reported that, among the principal fuels available for electricity production over the next 25 years, nuclear power has the lowest adverse impact on health.

The near future

Nuclear power makes economic sense in meeting growing energy demands and in reducing the nation's dependence on oil and gas.

Unless we try to rely entirely on coal production for generation, or to shut down the economy until forms like solar power prove affordable, nuclear power will become increasingly important to the near-term well-being of the country.

Nuclear policy

The electric utility industry agrees with the many expert opinions that ultimate disposal of radioactive wastes presents no insurmountable technical problems. Several acceptable methods are available.

But failure of the federal government to implement available nuclear waste disposal technology is being mistakenly seen as an indication that the nuclear waste issue cannot be resolved.

Recently, we urged the Administration to take advantage of extensive, existing technical and scientific knowledge and to implement a program on a rigid schedule to provide a spent-fuel storage facility and a waste repository at the earliest practical time. These steps are necessary to assure the continued operation of nuclear power plants, to minimize the uncertainty that has been slowing down commitments for future nuclear plants in this country, and to separate the waste disposal issue from the licensing of new power plants.

Congress has divided responsibility for the national waste management program among several agencies of the federal government. The Department of Energy, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency have elements of responsibility.

Now, Congress must provide additional effective legislative guidance for the waste management and spent-fuel storage programs.

The long run

Opinion polls repeatedly show that majorities of the American people support the use of nuclear energy to generate electricity. Where nuclear plants are in operation, the percentages are even higher.

If we are to be able to take advantage of the economic and energy-supply opportunities presented by nuclear energy, both in the near term and the long term, the federal government will need to take responsible action today.

If you would like to read more about nuclear energy as a source of electricity or learn more about the management of high-level radioactive wastes and spent fuel, write to us: Edison Electric Institute, 90 Park Ave., New York, NY 10016. We will be glad to send you more information.

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The dinners have also led to a few disclosures that could be embarrassing if anybody wanted to make anything of them. Barbara Walters of ABC and Hedrick Smith of *The New York Times* reported after their evening with the Carters that one of the President's reasons for convening the Camp David Mideast summit was a fear that Egypt would attack Israel again if the peace effort failed completely. It was correctly deduced that Carter had said as much at the dinner. Richard Strout (our TRB) reported in *The Christian Science Monitor* after the most recent dinner, and Carter confirmed at his press conference on October 10, that submitting SALT II to the Senate in the form of an executive agreement rather than a treaty is still a possibility. The Democratic leadership warned Carter recently that he'd enrage the Senate and risk defeat if he submitted an executive agreement requiring only majority approval instead of a treaty requiring two-thirds approval. Marquis Childs reported in his column after the same dinner that "an atmosphere of quiet confidence" pervades the White House, which is what the Carters want everybody to believe. Columnist Joseph Kraft reported after his dinner that the President had said he might be talking too much (evidently meaning that he didn't want to be a Lyndon Johnson). Guests at the dinners have been amazed by the President's uninhibited frankness, variously impressed and disturbed by his preoccupation with petty detail, and troubled by his and his staff's failure to say explicitly whether and in what fashion the Carters may be quoted. The President, who once sent word to me that "the President of the United States damn well intends his private engagements to stay private," has forbidden the White House staff to announce or confirm that the dinners occur or to say who is invited. None of the working stiffs who regularly cover the White House have been invited. Some of them resent this. I don't.

One of the more interesting White House developments concerning the media is the effect that the Camp David summit and the secrecy surrounding it had and are still having on Press Secretary Jody Powell. Powell was getting increasingly surly, combative and downright mean in his dealings with many journalists, individually and at the daily baitings known as White House news briefings, before the summit conference. Being openly, officially and indeed proudly secretive did wonders for him. Powell loved it, the journalists understood and accepted the situation, and ever since the conference ended Powell's been Jimmy Carter's Mister Sunshine, comparatively speaking. Occasional lapses have been inoffensive and usually couched in what passes with Powell for good humor.

His and Gerald Rafshoon's decision not to take advantage of what on its face seemed to be a public-relations break for them and the President is also interesting. It becomes even more interesting when the reasons for it are understood. Potentially the most damaging occurrence during the Carter presidency was Dr. Peter Bourne's reported statement to *The New York Times*, after he was caught falsifying the prescription of a restricted drug for one of his assistants and resigned, that there was a "high incidence" of marijuana use and occasional use of cocaine among White House employees. The President said in a written memo to his staff that use of the drugs was illegal and anybody on the staff who used them should seek other employment. Hamilton Jordan, who made the memo public and passsed it to the staff, half expected three or four assistants to resign immediately. Nobody has quit for that reason, so far as is known. Since the first uproar died away, a few reporters and columnists have tried to keep the issue alive, goading Powell and writing as if the widespread use of drugs by White House employees was a proven fact. Republican Congressman Henry J. Hyde of Illinois quoted Bourne's reported statement in a letter dated July 24 to Attorney General Griffin Bell, demanding an investigation of "this allegation of serious criminal activity within the President's official family." Hyde complained in a second letter dated September 11 that the Department of Justice had never replied. Minority Whip Robert H. Michel, also of Illinois, challenged the President to investigate various allegations of drug use by White House people, including Bourne's reported statement. Deputy Attorney General Benjamin R. Civiletti told Hyde, in a letter dated September 27, that "a responsible official" of the Justice Department had asked Peter Bourne "whether he had made the statement reported in the *New York Times* article." Civiletti continued: "Dr. Bourne responded that he had not made this statement. Further, Dr. Bourne stated that he did not have any personal knowledge of drug use by White House staff members, that he had never seen them using drugs, and that he was not aware of any drug abuse incident involving White House staffers." Without specifically denying the *New York Times* report, Bourne told *People* magazine, "I have no personal acquaintance with anyone in the White House using drugs." Hyde sent the Civiletti letter to the strike-bound *Times* with a note saying it "indicates that either your reporter is a liar, or Dr. Bourne is a liar." Hyde also sent James T. Wooten, the reporter who quoted Bourne (and has since quit the *Times*), a copy of the Civiletti letter. Hyde had not heard from either the *Times* or Wooten on October 11.

Two reporters who bitterly and repeatedly taxed Jody Powell at his briefings with the Justice Department's failure to answer Congressman Hyde have not mentioned the reply he finally got and the denial it conveyed. The reporters being who and what they are, this does not surprise me. At this writing, Powell has not mentioned the Civiletti letter and Peter Bourne's denials, either. Powell, Rafshoon and Hamilton Jordan must know perfectly well that there has been some use—I have no idea how much use, and suspect that it's been vastly exaggerated—of marijuana

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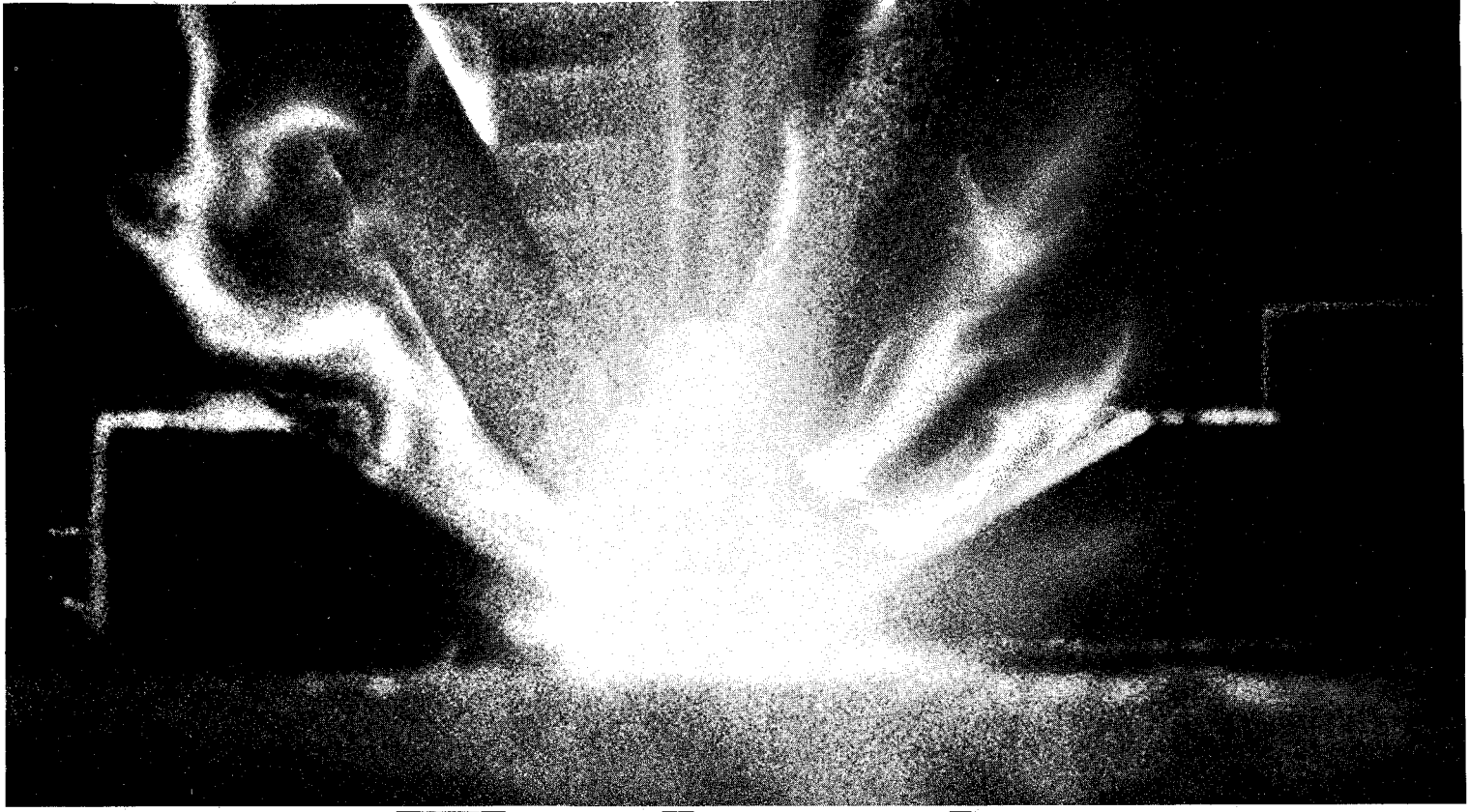

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and cocaine among White House employees. Powell, Rafshoon, Jordan and presumably the President are therefore happy to let that dozing dog lie. Powell—I don't know about Rafshoon and Jordan—is by no means certain that the *Times* misquoted Bourne. It follows that Powell is less than certain that Bourne told the Department of Justice the whole truth when he said that he did not say what the *Times* said he said.

Another unpleasantness that is still lurking on the White House fringe has to do with Columnist Jack Anderson's report in September that Robert Vesco, a fugitive financier accused of embezzlement on a grand scale, had tried to buy access to Hamilton Jordan, Attorney General Bell and Carter's friend and counsellor, Atlanta lawyer Charles Kirbo, through a Georgia friend of Jordan's, Albany attorney Spencer Lee IV, and Albany businessman R.L. Herring. Herring was convicted recently in a federal court on charges of fraud and racketeering and was sentenced to two years in prison. Anderson reported in a column published September 26 that some of the documents on which he based his original report had been "reconstructed from memory" by some of his Georgia informants. He noted in a spectacular understatement that "this casts a cloud . . . on the authenticity of the allegations that Jordan and Kirbo were involved with the Georgia influence peddlers." A key point in the initial rebuttal was that Spencer Lee dined in Washington on February 8, 1977, with one of Carter's White House Georgians, Richard Harden, and that Harden then dissuaded Lee from approaching Jordan on Vesco's behalf. Several facets of the subsequent White House handling of the mess interest me.

First, Harden refuses to discuss the affair with reporters who previously found him accessible and helpful. He talks about it only through Deputy Press Secretary Rex Granum. Second, Granum learned in the course of questioning Harden last September 11 that Harden on February 15, 1977, seven days after his dinner with Spencer Lee, had told President Carter about the meeting and the approach. Third, Granum and the White House press staff kept this information secret until September 19, when Lee told the *Atlanta Constitution* about Harden's meeting with Carter and the *Constitution* queried the White House about it. Powell, Granum's boss, reported it to the Justice Department September 11, the day Harden told Granum about it.

Granum says Harden says Lee had asked him, Harden, to assure Carter that he, Lee, wanted nothing more to do with the business and with the Vesco people who (Granum says Harden says Harden learned much later) had paid Lee a fee of $10,000. Granum also says Harden says that after he, Harden, had told Carter that Lee was determined to get and stay out of the matter, Carter handwrote a note to Attorney General Bell in Harden's presence but did not show or give the note to Harden. How it got to the Department of Justice is unknown. Bell says it never got to him. The original note was found late September 19 in the department's "appointments" file and a photocopy of it was found soon afterward in the White House central files. It read *in toto*: "Please see Spencer Lee when he asks for an appointment." Lee, Bell and all others concerned say Lee never asked for an appointment with Bell.

At a breakfast meeting with invited reporters at the White House on September 27, Carter was asked about his meeting with Harden and the note to Bell. The condensed gist of his answer follows: "I don't recall the conference with Richard Harden. I don't dispute what Harden said occurred there. I just don't recall it. I don't remember [writing the note to Bell]. It was not in our files and my belief, based on Jody's report of a conversation with Harden, was that he came and told me that Spencer Lee had come to Washington with the intention of talking to Hamilton Jordan about the Vesco case. After talking with Harden, Lee decided not to even talk to Jordan and went home. Harden said I told Harden it was best not brought up in the White House but if Lee had anything else to say about it he had best take it up with the Justice Department. I thought Lee had acted properly in withdrawing from the case, and I had written a note to hand to Richard Harden, that if Lee wanted to tell the Attorney General what occurred, that he should see him and then describe his involvement. That is all I know."

Despite the obvious holes in Carter's account—a copy of the note was in the White House files; Carter did not show or give the note to Harden—I don't have the trouble that some people have in believing the essence of the White House story. After all, three of Jimmy Carter's senior and closest White House assistants—Hamilton Jordan, Jody Powell and Robert Lipshutz—read an FBI report on Bert Lance's Georgia banking practices before Carter announced his intention to make Lance his budget director, and didn't think the report was worth mentioning to the President-elect.

John Osborne

The slippery slope in southern Africa

Mr. Smith's Visit

Events in southern Africa appear to be moving inexorably toward a tragedy of vast proportions. Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith's visit to Washington and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's almost simultaneous fire-brigade dash to Pretoria to try to salvage the agreement over Namibia served to underscore how urgent and dangerous the long-building crises in that region have now become.

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Intelligence reports reaching Washington indicate that a build-up of Soviet and Cuban military equipment in support of the Rhodesian guerrillas in Zambia has begun in earnest.

After listening with dismay to Smith's private and public statements in Washington, and evaluating current information from South Africa and Namibia, the Carter Administration is prepared for the worst to occur soon. Carter aides fear that the efforts of Western diplomacy may have run their course, and that without major shifts in positions by principal African players—which would be unlikely—open warfare is virtually inevitable.

It is not necessarily coincidence that the Rhodesian and Namibian crises have come to a head at the same time. The link between these two crises is the government of South Africa, whose basic stance has greatly hardened since September, after a somewhat reasonable period earlier in the year. The general disarray in the black frontline states adds to the danger. There is growing concern that the southern African conflicts could become part of the larger East-West equation, further damaging relations between the US and the Soviet Union.

In Rhodesia, the deadlock between the Smith regime—refurbished last March by the inclusion of three black leaders in the Salisbury "interim government"—and the factions of the Patriotic Front guerrillas outside the country remains unbreakable. Both Smith and the guerrilla chiefs refused to attend a general conference proposed by the British and the Americans. The Anglo-American plan was to lead to the establishment of a joint black majority transitional government, United Nations-supervised elections, the international recognition of an independent Zimbabwe and the lifting of economic sanctions against Salisbury. The assumption in the Anglo-American plan was that terrorism and guerrilla attacks would cease under such an arrangement.

But the only outcome of Smith's visit and his conference with Vance on October 9 was to make it clearer than ever before that he is prepared to go it alone, courting disaster if necessary. He told Vance that he would have no dealings with the Patriotic Front factions, whom he regards as "Marxist terrorists," and that he would proceed with internal elections, if not in the first week of December, as originally planned, then shortly thereafter. A dour and unbending man, Smith seems convinced that after this *fait accompli*, the West would have no choice but to grant him full recognition.

To be sure, Smith was burned when he held a secret meeting last August in Lusaka, Zambia, with Joshua Nkomo, the head of the ZAPU guerrilla faction and a man the West still regards as a possible wild card in the lethal Rhodesian game of poker. Nkomo, whose 8000-man army in Zambia was equipped by the Russians, may in the long run be acceptable to Smith as a partner—though not as Prime Minister, a post to which Nkomo aspires. Smith's idea is to be succeeded by Bishop Abel Muzorewa, a black member of the Salisbury interim set-up.

The Smith-Nkomo meeting was arranged by Zambia's President Kenneth Kaunda, reportedly under British pressure and with American blessings. But, by all accounts, it produced nothing except an agreement for them to meet again, this time with Robert Mugabe, the leader of ZANU, the other guerrilla faction. According to Smith, such a three-way conference was sabotaged by Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere, who talked Mugabe out of it. Nyerere is said to think that the guerrillas can win militarily and thus have no need to negotiate with Smith, a view generally shared by Mugabe.

Nkomo, who has a reputation as an opportunist and who maintains close contacts with the West as well as Moscow, compounded the tensions when he took responsibility for shooting down a Rhodesian airliner following his meeting with Smith. At the same time, Nkomo and Mugabe separately emphasized their determination to stay away from any general conference with the Smith regime based on the model of the Geneva parley organized by Britain in December 1976, which ended in a total breakdown.

There is no love lost between Nkomo and Mugabe. They tend to neutralize each other in negotiations with Smith. Neither can afford to appear more accomodating to Smith than the other. And as President Carter pointed out at his news conference on October 10, all parties rejected his proposal for a general conference in the neutral terrain of New York.

Meanwhile, Smith insists that he can go on fighting the guerrillas for the next ten years—and win. This judgment is not taken seriously by senior US officials, who have grave doubts whether the "internal settlement" compromise of last March—the inclusion of three blacks in Smith's Executive Council—can last at all beyond the end of this year. Likewise, American officials dismiss as nonsense the claim by the Reverend Ndabaninghi Sithole, a black member of the Executive Council who accompanied Smith to Washington, that he controls most of the guerrillas currently operating inside Rhodesia.

The most likely next development is a greatly stepped up war between Rhodesia and the guerrillas even before the rainy season sets in during November. It has become obvious that neither side has the slightest intention of negotiating and that little further can be accomplished by Western diplomacy.

Smith seems to have no interest in a new variant of the Anglo-American plan, the idea of an immediate referendum inside Rhodesia to be held in lieu of the general elections that now are evidently out of the question. This is the so-called "Option B," providing that the Salisbury regime will be internationally recognized and sanctions lifted if Smith agrees to a

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referendum to determine what future political status is desired by Rhodesia's black majority.

With the Salisbury regime demanding instant Western recognition on the strength of the March reorganization and the West opposing it because all the elements of the Anglo-American plan haven't been put in place, the Carter administration's assessment is that Smith is moving his nation toward chaos. A civil war involving all the Rhodesian black factions as well as the whites is seen as a certainty. The guerrillas no longer have any incentive to talk with Smith, both because of his unbending stand and because a military triumph seems attainable.

Nobody can predict where such a civil war might lead. The official US view is that direct involvement by Cuban troops is unlikely at first, especially if the guerrillas are winning. But if South Africa decides to intervene to prevent Smith's collapse, then Cuba's engagement is taken for granted. This, in turn, could trigger some sort of US response, though Washington officials refuse to speculate yet what it might be.

In South Africa, the selection of P.W. Botha, the principal hardliner in the ruling white supremacy establishment, as the country's new Prime Minister increases the chances of more and more active South African support for the Smith regime. Smith's fall would be an immediate danger to the South Africans.

There is a theory that Botha was picked precisely because of the Rhodesian peril. The same theory holds that the Rhodesian situation is what caused John Vorster, Botha's predecessor, last September 20 to cancel plans for a United Nations-supervised elections in Namibia—the old League of Nations mandate territory known as Southwest Africa—and to hold a purely South African election, making it a puppet state. Vorster's and Botha's stated explanation for ignoring the painstakingly negotiated Namibia plan was that the UN exceeded its authority by announcing a 7500-man peace-keeping force for the new country and an oversized UN civilian contingent. But American officials believe that the step was taken because South Africa desires a security belt along its borders because of the volatility of Rhodesia.

The only political party in Namibia willing to participate in the Pretoria-run elections is the Turnhalle Alliance, which is pro-South African. Militant blacks, led by the SWAPO organization, are expected to launch guerrilla warfare against the South Africans, creating another area of dangerous instability, even if Botha thinks he can handle it militarily.

Western nations, notably the US, had agreed to veto proposals in the UN Security Council for mandatory economic sanctions against South Africa so long as the Namibia agreement was honored. But a breakdown in Namibia may well force the West to allow the sanctions to be approved. This would isolate South Africa even more—and probably kill whatever chances remain for effective diplomacy in southern Africa as a whole.

It is to face this crisis that Secretary Vance and the foreign ministers of Britain, France, Canada and West Germany flew to Pretoria to persuade Botha to revert to the original Namibia plan. Hopes for success are not great, but the West believes the effort is justified given what is at stake. Continued South African sway over Namibia may, among other things, put an end to the cautious moves by Marxist Angola, which is Namibia's northern neighbor, to establish ties with the West.

The only hope, a tenuous one, for stability in southern Africa is the extent to which some black frontline states are suffering economically from the tensions in the region. Early in October, for example, Zambia's President Kaunda reopened the border with Rhodesia to export his copper and be able to keep importing from abroad. Tanzanian and Mozambique transport facilities—Zambia's only other sea outlets—are inadequate. The presidents of Tanzania and Mozambique failed to dissuade Kaunda from his decision which, in effect, breaches the anti-Rhodesian blockade. Kaunda, the host to Nkomo's guerrilla army, insists that the reopening of the border in no way weakens his anti-Smith posture, but the hope remains that economic realities may in time lessen the militancy of the frontline states and thus result in a Rhodesian settlement.

But these are thin hopes while the dangers of southern African wars—from Rhodesia to Namibia—grow every hour. For the US, these crises may be even more difficult to solve than Middle Eastern disputes. They now have a greater explosive potential.

Tad Szulc

Nobel Laureate

Isaac the Fool

It will take place with great circumstance, smoothly, according to the rules in a regal setting in Stockholm. Isaac Bashevis Singer in full evening dress will receive the Nobel Prize. His loyal and affectionate readers throughout the world will wish him well, but suspect, every one of us, that cufflinks were lost, that Singer's black shoelace snapped at the last moment in his hotel room, or that the sleek flight attendant on his jet from Kennedy served drinks with the inky fingers of a Yeshiva boy and asked an impertinent question of our hero instead of mouthing a polite phrase.

We should feel that it's something of a miracle to see Singer approach the podium to receive his prize, a man

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who has spent his life writing always in a doomed language, most often of places obliterated by the blackest chapter of recent history. What a foolish idea, really, to presume that old tales from the shtetls of Frampol and Bilgoray can compete with the novelistic complexities of urban life. What a silly notion. There's something perverse and scholastic about it for a major writer in the 20th century to have chosen Yiddish instead of polishing his style in Polish, German or English. Yet there he'll be, looking more ordinary than ever in his fancy clothes, a man who has simply followed his calling to write as if it were a religious vocation, and believed in the value of his own experience as a great storyteller must.

Though it will be of interest to hear what Singer may say upon this grand occasion, what I really look forward to is the story that will come, for there will be a story shortly, not so much about a trip, wining and dining, Swedish blondes and a befuddled, bright old Jew from New York—but about some small pluck of misfortune, that instant of the broken shoelace, which will reverberate like the sounding string, Chekhov's mysterious thread of civilized continuity, which snaps at the end of *The Cherry Orchard.*

Isaac Bashevis Singer was born in Leoncin, a small town in Poland, in 1904. His father was a rabbi, honored but poor. The particulars of Singer's early life are told in a beautiful and disturbing memoir, *In My Father's Court,* published in 1966. It's Portrait of the Artist to an amazing degree. Young Isaac, like Stephen Daedalus, leaves home, his religious and moral battles inconclusively settled, to live as an artist in a secular world. It would be incorrect to draw further parallels between Warsaw and Dublin, because Joyce chose his exile and Singer did not. He realized that it was absolutely necessary to leave Poland and to come to New York in 1935. Still, there is something strangely similar in the desire of both these writers to evoke in such elaborate detail the smells and sights of home. Perhaps it was the desire to claim through art the narrow world they had to leave because of their art; or a possession of the past, the grated turnips and creaking bedsprings, as well as all the arguments, as an apology for their sacrilege.

I know that I read *Gimpel the Fool,* Singer's first book of short stories and his masterpiece, published in the late 1950s, when I was living in exile (or so I thought) from the intellectual glamour of the eastern seaboard. The book was given to me in Gambier, Ohio, by a poet, Irving Feldman, a New York Jew and fellow emigre. We combed through those stories on idle Sunday afternoons as though we both remembered Singer's world from a mutual past. I could hardly have known the house of study, the silver clasps on the Jewish prayer book, the *Simcas Torah,* the marriage brokers or dybbuks of Hasidic lore, but this world was not exotic to me. When a house in the ghetto or a synagogue is fully imagined by Singer, no one is excluded. There was no need for my friend Feldman to explain charming details of a Sabbath meal, or quaint matters of orthodox dress. It's all there: Singer gave us his shtetls, and later his upper west side, his Miami Beach condominiums, that they may serve his story.

The mutual past we all share when we read him is literary. His fables and stories, the inspired characters, rabbis, charlatans, whores, so good, so evil, are out of a world that can never be parochial, a world out of our childhood legends, out of medieval romance, out of episodic sagas. They are the stories that were once told to sustain life and community of an evening in any house, any town.

But being at least partially literary in origin, Singer's tales are also more sophisticated than we first imagine. It's astonishing how difficult it is to construe his work. As we read, we may conjure up Freud, the archetypal meanings of sudden death and transfiguration. But we are left, more than with any contemporary writer except perhaps Borges, with the story, the pure story. In Singer's balance of innocence and sophistication is really where his magic lies.

In a well known inteview, Singer once said that he wrote "as if," meaning that he wrote about a lost world of Jewish culture as if the second world war had not held overwhelming tragedy for the Jewish people. And that was further extended to his feeling that it is quite natural and healthy in the face of such knowledge to go on living and writing. As we look at Singer's work now, in the continuing stories we can see that there is never a touch of self-pity or pomposity. There's not one nostalgic note for the days of piety and poverty, because the problems of our secularism and our human frailty, our loss of faith, our loss of faith in both God and a shaky rational world, remain as immediate and as passionate to him as they were the day Isaac Singer left home. Almost twenty years after Singer's interview, we can extend the "as if" to include more than the known holocaust. He writes as if words themselves were not questioned in high literary circles, as if we had been lectured and analyzed in our modern fiction quite enough, as if, given the possibility of thorough destruction, stories still matter.

One of the most perfect turns in *Gimpel the Fool* is that Gimpel at the end becomes a storyteller, a man who in reality has seen and heard everything, but who chooses to spin yarns about "improbable things that can never happen—about devils, magicians, windmills, and the

Coming:

Geoffrey Barradough on Barbara Tuchman

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like." So it is with Singer—faced with the hard facts, he continues to play the fool, to entertain us, to teach us, even to love us with his impossible lies. There's no telling what Singer will say in Stockholm, but my guess is that there will not be any false rhetoric nor high oration. He will speak as he writes, as Joyce wrote, as a man who is in touch with his language and his people—the living and the dead.

Maureen Howard

Maureen Howard is a novelist and critic. Her latest book is *Facts of Life* (Little, Brown).

Isaac Bashevis Singer, II

A Dybbuk in DC

"Tell me a story," Isaac Bashevis Singer requested a few minutes after I met him for the first time.

It was in 1971, at a writers' conference I covered as a reporter. My colleagues besieged Saul Bellow and Norman Podhoretz; Singer was standing alone—a Savile Row pinstripe suit in a sea of corduroy. I walked over to him and said that I had read all his books and that I thought he is the greatest. He wasn't taken aback by my youthful enthusiasm, nor did he look flattered. I said something about his being an heir to Gogol and Balzac, and that one day he surely would win the Nobel Prize. Oh no, he replied, Jews don't like me because I am truthful about them and Gentiles find me too narrowly Jewish. Besides, he said, there is nothing modern about the ghosts and demons I write about.

But they are real, I cried out. Singer smiled in a grandfatherly way.

And you, he said to me, do you earn a good living? He asked me whether I was married and had a good wife. Did we have children and what future did we have in mind for them?

His intrusiveness was matter-of-fact; he listened intently to my replies. We appeared to be sitting on a scotchguarded brocade sofa in a Washington hotel lobby, but the higher truth is that we were together on a coach traveling across a birch forest somewhere in Eastern Europe.

I told him my favorite family story from the Old World. Akiba Schwarcz was inconsolably, incurably in love with Rachel Kaufman whose parents would not let her marry him. His brothers took him across the Carpathian mountains to seek the advice of the wise rabbi of Belz. The rabbi assured him: "Life has another Rachel Kaufman for you." On the way home, the axle of the carriage broke in a snow storm, and the brothers had to spend the sabbath in the inn of a strange village. There they met a lovely girl, a relative of the innkeeper. And yes, her name was Rachel Kaufman, and by next summer, they were married—Rachel, my grandmother, and Akiba, my grandfather.

Singer asked, may I have the story? He asked with the eagerness of a child pleading with a playmate for a particularly bright marble. I said yes, and I felt very generous.

I told him I had known the hero of his novel *The Magician of Lublin*, Yasha Mazur—a circus star always on the go, a libertine and thief turned saint in the end. *My* magician was a great wit and a communist agitator with a fatal weakness for women. He could not resist the chance for conquest. Singer asked, did he repent? In his dreams, toward the end, I said. "Whatever doesn't really happen is dreamed at night," he quoted his character Gimpel the Fool. That shlemiel of shlemiels believed everyone and in everything though he was fooled all the time. Gimpel's philosophy was: "What's the good of *not* believing?"

We spoke about the Jews who had once crisscrossed the towns and villages of Eastern Europe, praying, begging, selling. Tell me about those you have known, Singer asked. I remembered one traveling salesman who dealt in special abrasive stones, better than anything else commercially available, guaranteed to last a lifetime. His ambition was to find stones as hard as diamonds in the Carpathian mountains, or perhaps rare metal ores, but at least enough whetting and grinding stones to make a living. He was a much-appreciated big-city guest in provincial households. He could talk himself out of all predicaments and into an endless succession of business ventures. He was a close relative of mine, as well as of the magician's. A troubled soul, a vagabond. I asked Singer, is he now an unfulfilled spirit waiting to enter another body? Does a return depend on the degree of eagerness to live again? Or on the need to expiate sins?

Singer didn't answer my questions. He had to catch the shuttle to New York to be home before the night. But he promised to come to my house for dinner when in Washington next time.

A few months later, he came. He brought a bottle of choice English sherry. He was delighted with my wife's vegetarian cooking and acted surprised that we knew of his aversion to eating meat. He made friends with our two-year-old son.

He exulted in being a guest—a stranger just passing through, a teller and gatherer of tales, a sharer in our secrets for one evening. To meet him is to enter his fiction and to play roles assigned by him. Or perhaps it is the other way around: like every truly great writer, he invites his readers to a masked ball where each guest is an acquaintance in disguise.

Singer's parchment-thin complexion is taut, the color

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of ivory, with veins adding an undertone of pink. His features are from a Durer etching—he could be a counselor to a grand duke, an alchemist dabbling in black magic, an imp mocking the simpleminded. He is a visitor in this century, to these shores.

I had invited a friend to join us for dinner. When my puzzled wife asked why I asked that particular friend, I couldn't explain. But it didn't take long for Singer to find out my friend's story. He had had a grandmother, a querulous bitter soul who betrayed her harmless, gentle husband and sent him to an insane asylum. My friend bore the grandfather's name. Singer nodded sympathetically when my friend listed some symptoms he had recently developed: unaccountable cravings for dishes his grandmother liked and he normally did not; dark thoughts about the world he couldn't intellectually justify; a tendency to get into violent arguments, out of character for him; disorientation accompanied by a sense of need for a strong direction, an answer to all problems.

Could it be a *dybbuk*? My friend asked Singer. Is it one of those cases of demonic possession you write about?

Singer didn't reply right away. His hands moved first, hesitantly cupping the air, then he left his palms upturned. The *dybbuk* is the stuff of literature, old-fashioned literature, he said, finally. *Dybbukim* might have existed in Poland, ruling over the minds of poor, frightened, ignorant Jews. But this was a long time ago—a century and more. *Dybbuks* have no place in today's rational universe, in this scientific age. My friend should get married, Singer advised, raise children and stop thinking about the strange stories of the past. Besides, he said in a whisper, as if imparting to us a trade secret, let's not take literature too seriously.

But if you don't mind, Singer said to my friend, I'd like to write about you. I'll make you a Polish Jew of the 19th century.

My friend liked the idea. It occurred to him that his grandmother's angry spirit might find fulfillment being magnified into a literary figure.

Over the years since that evening, my friend has read Singer's many *dybbuk* stories. He says that they reassure him that he is not crazy, but merely part of a society of people with two souls instead of one. And, he adds, his grandmother's soul seems to have adjusted to his world.

As I drove Singer back to his hotel that evening, he told me that I ought to help my friend, and stand by him when the *dybbuk* overtakes him.

But you said such things no longer exist! I cried.

To you, I can say he is possessed, Singer explained. Of course he has a *dybbuk*: his is a classic case. But I cannot help him. I don't know how to help him. I can only *write* about spirits.

Charles Fenyvesi

Charles Fenyvesi is a Washington writer.

The comedian as oppressor.

Screw You Humor

by Arthur Lubow

David McClelland, a star *Harvard Lampoon* cartoonist and occasional *National Lampoon* contributor, arrived at a friend's flat in a Manhattan high-rise on September 9, 1976. Shaking hands, he walked through the living room until he reached the window, and then kept on walking until he hit the pavement. He was 29. Shocked, his friends responded in the way they felt most comfortable. They made jokes. "What's the difference between David McClelland and a pizza?" went one joke of the time. Answer: "You don't have to watch out for broken glass in a pizza." "Where are they keeping David McClelland?" asked another wit. "The International House of Pancakes."

That's Lampoon humor. It's sharp; it's vicious; it's sweeping the country. The movie *National Lampoon's Animal House* has grossed $60 million and still tops *Variety*'s list. The novelization has sold 500,000 copies and a television series is in the works. *Saturday Night Live*, an independent *Lampoon* TV spin-off, is beginning its fourth year. A *Lampoon* parody of a small-town Sunday

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newspaper is third on the trade paperback bestseller list. A *Lampoon* album, "That's Not Funny, It's Sick," has sold 75,000 units. Twenty-first Century Communications, the *Lampoon*'s parent company, is developing three new movies. Two actors who began with the *Lampoon* revue *Lemmings*—Chevy Chase and John Belushi—have become stars.

The arrogant, macho *Lampoon* brand of humor has picked up gentler camp followers in its march to victory. Over the last year, two non-*Lampoon* talents have advanced to the front lines of written humor. Both are women. Fran Lebowitz, whose *Metropolitan Life* has sold over 90,000 hardback copies, is a witty New York voice of cultivated effeteness. Cyra McFadden's *The Serial* gently devastates the with-it language and lifestyle of California's Marin County. It has sold 109,000 copies and has become a standard coffee table item in the homes it ridicules. Lebowitz and McFadden wield scalpels which are sharper and less bloody than the Lampoon bludgeon, their air of aloof superiority is similarly elitist. The attitude is illustrated perfectly by an ad for the *Animal House* movie which shows cast members thrusting their middle fingers toward the camera. This is the time of screw-you humor.

Its practitioners like to trace the roots of screw-you humor back to culture heroes like Oscar Wilde, Dorothy Parker and Lenny Bruce. Certainly, they have learned much from their predecessors. Bruce's vicious vulgarity cleared the path for the *Lampoon* stampede. Wilde and Parker maintained a cultured arrogance that Lebowitz and McFadden both affect. But in studies of literary heredity, it's important to keep track of what has dropped out of the gene pool. The elders were infected with a humility that often festered into self-loathing. As a consequence, even their sharpest jokes were tinged with compassion. Although they were cultural elitists, Wilde, Bruce and Parker were also political leftists. They reserved their contempt for the wealthy and the philistine. *Lampoon* humor is less fastidious. It picks off the easiest targets: usually women, blacks and homosexuals. It victimizes society's victims.

"What I do is baby-seal hunter's humor," said Michael O'Donoghue, now a television producer and once the leading writer on the *National Lampoon* and *Saturday Night Live*. "I try to leave blood on the floor." When the *Lampoon* began in 1970, its writers knew whose flesh they were after. Blue was the preferred color of the victim's blood. The *Lampoon* dealt in satire, a form which depends on a sharp dichotomy between ins and outs. The joke must be on someone, and in those days, politicians and plutocrats bore the load. One of O'Donoghue's funniest and nastiest pieces was "The Vietnamese Baby Book." In the form of a proud parent's scrapbook, O'Donoghue chronicled the progress of an infant delivered to a 17-year-old orphan raped in an alley by an American GI. The baby's handprint had only four fingers. Baby's first word: "Medic." The weight chart declined steadily from birth. And the scrapbook thoughtfully provided a space for the baby's grave. "The Vietnamese Baby Book" is a classic of sick humor, brutal and repellent. But the barbs are not directed at the pitiful Vietnamese girl. The double-barreled wit is aimed at the American scoundrels waging the war. "Towards the end of the Vietnamese war, you had to slap people in the mouth with a meat-ax to catch their attention," O'Donoghue said. "They would watch kids' heads being blown apart on the evening news and it would make them hungry for dinner."

The *National Lampoon* was built on the fault line that separates the hip from the straight. It was unstable ground. In the early years of the 1970s, the hip people were left-wing, countercultural and pop. The straights were conservative, pompous and boorish. But as the decade wore on, the politics shifted and the sides reshuffled. The hip people became those clever enough to make a bundle of money and spend it on the right clothes, the right food, the right drugs and the right discos. The straights were everybody else.

A young Brattleboro, Vermont, Marxist confessed after seeing *Animal House*, "It was sexist, racist, disgusting—and I loved it." The movie's politics is no longer an issue. No one asks the *Lampoon* where it stands politically, and the magazine's editors like that just fine. This is the humor that dare not speak its name. "There's a strong right-wing bent to most of the people who write here," editor-in-chief P.J. O'Rourke said, when pressed. "I think Communism is real wrong. It's no fun at all. I'd take this country over Latvia any day of the week." Asked whether there is anyone he would not make fun of, O'Rourke thought a moment and said, "I guess a guy my age making $500,000." He was not joking.

O'Donoghue said he regrets that the current *Lampoon* staff has made a specialty of ridiculing women, blacks and homosexuals. Another disgruntled former editor, Sean Kelly, tears into his successors. "All the stuff that we did ironically, P.J. simply does," he complained. "He doesn't get the joke. He's an upwardly aspiring, middle-American guttersnipe. He and his cohorts sit around fingering each other's ties and saying how awful Negroes are. Our enemies were wealth and religion.

Coming Soon:

Election Special

A series of reports from around the country on the fall campaigns.

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Their enemies are welfare mothers."

A glance at the two latest copies of the *Lampoon* reveals what the boys have on their minds. The current issue is devoted to Entertainment. It includes a spoof on the lucrative practice of "novelizing" hit movies; a guide to making your own television shows; a parody of disco and rock; and a cartoon of a newspaper reporter who exposes corruption in a Hollywood studio, sells the story to the movies and becomes a corrupt Hollywood mogul himself. The *Lampoon* writers work for a corporation that has just produced a smash hit movie, has released six successful records and is now moving into television. The magazine's co-founder, Doug Kenney, sold his share of the business for $2.6 million and became a hot screenplay writer. No wonder the *Lampoon* editors are cracking jokes about Hollywood. It's where they want to go when they don't grow up.

In the September issue, the *Lampoon* aims its slingshot at the favorite trinity of women, blacks and homosexuals—or girls, Negroes and homos, in *Lampoon* parlance. A parody of black hair styles shows a woman with stringbeans in her hair, a man with an Afro shaped into a baseball-cap topiary, and a man with credit cards, $50 bills and a Johnny Walker Red bottle hanging from his plaited braids. Elsewhere in the magazine, we are treated to "what you might have seen if you had peeked up girl's dresses by looking at the toes of their patent leather shoes." Finally, the issue offers "1979 Homo Fashion Predictions." The editors have noticed a gay fashion of wearing workingman's clothes, and although they can't explain it—"the fags aren't talking"—they present sketches of a forest ranger's gear, a chauffeur's uniform and a fisherman's outfit as examples of what will be chic this year.

Animal House is funnier than the *Lampoon*. Most of the film is silly without being comic, but it has its moments. John Belushi, playing the campus slob Bluto, provides the movie's one real laugh. Running down the school cafeteria line, he stuffs his face with food that he can eat before arriving at the cashier. He seats himself at the table of the college snobs and shovels down food as they watch, understandably repelled. While they insult him, he says nothing. Then he looks up. "See if you can guess what I am now," he chirps brightly, stuffing his cheeks with mashed potatoes. He slams his bulging cheeks with his fists, splattering his tormentors with potatoes. "I'm a zit," he smiles. "Get it?"

Animal House is Clearasil comedy. The movie is set in 1962, just before politics appeared with the serpent's gift of self-awareness and ended those brainless college days. Recapturing the legendary spirit of the 1950s, *Animal House* romps through boyish pranks, toga parties and food fights. But the expertise of *Lampoon* veteran writers prevents it from ever becoming good clean fun. The protagonists are two dorks with feet firmly planted in the muck and flies always at half-mast. The girls are all orifices; only the wrappers vary. The blacks are conked dudes with huge teeth. The goody-goods are probably homos. And the movie ends in a barrage of tedious and senseless violence.

Because denigration of women is a cornerstone of *Lampoon* humor, one would expect the leading new women wits to be different. And they are. It may be unfair to include Fran Lebowitz and Cyra McFadden in a discussion that focuses on the *Lampoon* group. McFadden is the author of *The Serial*, a clever satire of the hip affluent life in northern California. Her jokes are mostly twists on hip argot: women who can't "get behind ironing boards," men who aren't "tracking" and wind up "all over the board." Her characters say things like, "You made your waterbed and you can lie on it," or, "The minted trout is fabulous but you might want to consider the special—if you're into taking risks." Marin County is a rich field for satire, and McFadden dredges up every bit of comic gold. As her characters inspect Camembert at The Cheese Store, pick up girls at the Trident and drink lemon-grass tea at Camp Middle Earth, they are usually funny and even, occasionally, sympathetic.

"I feel some affection for them," McFadden says. "A lot of the people who are going through the sexual group groping are sympathetic. I don't try to leave blood on the floor—a little Perrier water, maybe." Her satire is comedy of manners, and her characters trace their lineage to Sheridan's Lady Sneerwell and Moliere's Monsieur Jourdain. They are pretty but pitiful, pretentious but self-deluded. McFadden is good-humored. At 40, she seems far more mature than 27-year-old Lebowitz or the overgrown Poonies in their late 20s and early 30s. Living in Marin County, she may be misted by the free-floating mellowness. But like the *Lampoon* writers, she is always an observer: these are not her foibles she is writing about. "I lived in Mill Valley ten years before it became hip," she boasts.

The streets and the jokes of New York are harder than McFadden's Marin. This is where Fran Lebowitz is coming from. She made her name by writing a column in *Andy Warhol's Interview*, a fashionable newsprint magazine with few subscribers and, one suspects, even fewer readers. Only by publishing her pieces as a book, *Metropolitan Life*, did she burst from obscurity. Despite her mannish jackets and button-down shirts, Lebowitz has a decidedly feminine voice. "The *Lampoon* is the most boyish humor," she says. "You have to be a 17-year-old boy to fully appreciate it. It may be a smart locker room, but it's still a locker room. It's not my favorite sensibility."

Lebowitz hangs out with the fashionable homos and designers that the *Lampoon* ridicules. "*Interview* is like the *National Lampoon*—it's a school newspaper," she says. "It's just a different school." She reports that only one topic is taboo: "You can't make jokes about Halston and use his name." Lebowitz names as her heroes Oscar Wilde and, "20,000 miles below," Mark Twain and Evelyn Waugh, but she is a smart, funny New York

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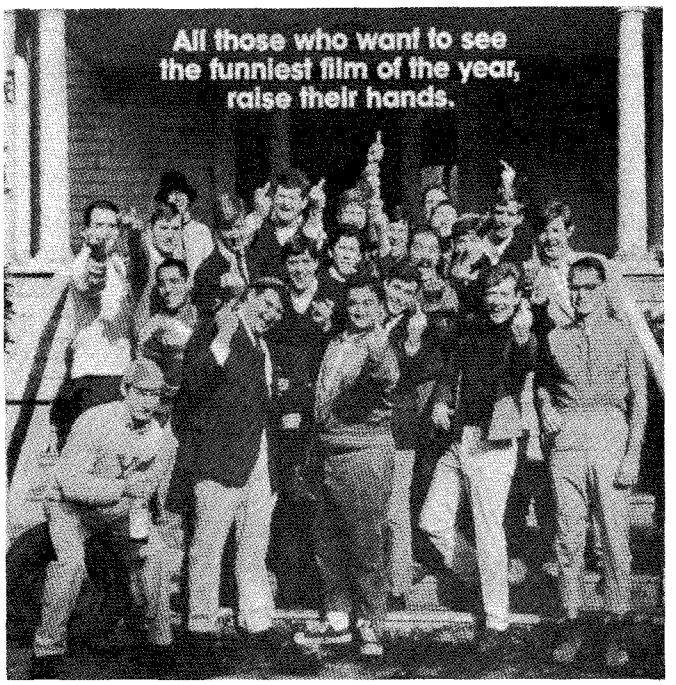
woman and the obvious comparison is Dorothy Parker. In her disparaging use of the word "lady," in her distaste for ambitious fools and tacky furniture, in her fascination with telephones, liquor and parties, Lebowitz owes Parker a large debt. The debt is unacknowledged, and Lebowitz can be forgiven, because the differences are more interesting than the similarities. Beneath Parker's laughter, the attentive listener can hear a shriek of despair. The typical Parker protagonist is a clever, sophisticated woman who has been shamefully treated by a stupid, handsome, thoughtless man. Although her women realize the absurdity of their situation, they are helpless. They are victims of the human condition—usually, the war between the sexes.

Lebowitz's heroines are victims of domineering house plants, digital clocks and editors who respect deadlines. The pathos is gone. The beautiful brutes who tormented Parker's women have become pretty-boy "tricks" of Lebowitz's gay companions: their sin is to annoy her by foolishly believing that the first amendment allows them to speak at dinner. Lebowitz says she envies tricks: "The best thing in life is to be beautiful." But her life isn't bad. Friends, fame and fortune are a good start. Her writing expresses no pain stronger than a hangover headache. She is often hilariously funny, but it is a brittle humor, drained of sentiment or compassion.

Like the *Lampoon* writers, Lebowitz never makes fun of herself. An occasional wry self-disparagement, perhaps; but the reader never doubts that Lebowitz is the arbiter of style, and style is what counts. She writes: "The three questions of greatest concern are: Is it attractive? Is it amusing? Does it know its place?" Not surprisingly, this queen of meritocratic snobs comes from the world of fashion. "Everything about the fashion world I find entertaining," she says. "It's the ultimate artificial business. The things that are funniest are the least real and the least weighty." Most people she finds "objects of ridicule" and she feels "a fairly great distance between me and most people." An ardent individualist, she harbors no "allegiance to large groups of people—I feel that I'm watching them."

One wonders who reads Lebowitz and who laughs at her jokes. Fire Island Pines has few bookstores. Dress designers are not notorious bibliophiles. The secret to her amazingly broad appeal is her sensibility, which may be called, in an imperfect phrase, a gay sensibility. "It's a certain irresponsibility at not being married or having children," Lebowitz says. "I wouldn't call it lightheartedness, but superficiality. I don't care if the planet blows up after I'm dead. And I don't think other people who don't have children care either. You'd only care if someone you love would be alive then. In a certain way, it's like being a kid."

Kids make fun of people who are different from them. Kids don't care what they break because they know someone will clean up after them. Kids join clubs



Publicity photo for "National Lampoon's Animal House." Courtesy of Universal Pictures

and laugh at those not allowed to join. Kids pick on weaklings. Kids relish violence. Kids snicker at sex. Compare the shallow and childish level of the new screw-you humor to the competition. The leading humorist in America today is Woody Allen. Allen's recent essays tower above the products of his younger rivals. Unlike the bright young crowd at the *Lampoon*, he has read philosophy, not college philosophy reading lists. His subjects are death, despair and paranoia. And his results are genuinely funny. When Allen writes about Nazis, he casts his story as the memoirs of Hitler's barber Schmeed. "As I told the tribunal at Nuremberg, I did not know that Hitler was a Nazi," Allen's Schmeed writes. "The truth was that for years I thought he worked for the phone company. When I finally did find out what a monster he was, it was too late to do anything, as I had already made a down payment on some furniture. Once, toward the end of the war, I did contemplate loosening the Fuehrer's neck-napkin and allowing some tiny hairs to get down his back, but at the last minute my nerve failed me."

In one funny paragraph, Allen has devastated the complicity of "good Germans" and the avarice of war-criminals-turned-memoirists. And yet, he has left you room to pity this nebbish barber and to wonder: would *you* have behaved differently? All this and laughs, too. Whether Allen is describing his fear that "there is an afterlife but no one will know where it's being held" or observing that "the lion and the calf shall lie down together but the calf won't get much sleep," he is joking about the human condition. He is in the same boat as the reader. "His one regret in life is that he is not someone else."

In the early days, the *Lampoon* aimed at many worthy targets. But satire without purpose is like a rifle without a marksman—pointless and dangerous. Allen comes out of a tradition of Jewish humor, the comedian

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as victim. The *Lampoon* is something else. It is rich white humor, the comedian as oppressor. *Lampoon* jokes are the sort that gave the Cossacks a good chuckle after a night at the pogroms. It is fed by a confluence of two streams of thought: the Harvard arrogance represented by the *Lampoon*'s father, the *Harvard Lampoon* ("Harvard was helpful in giving the *Lampoon* from the start a lot of self-confidence," says O'Rourke, not himself a Harvard grad); and upper-class Catholic wit, mimicked by Sean Kelly: "Isn't it amusing to watch things come and go while we who have a grasp on the eternal verities gaze from on high and smile?" The *Lampoon* editorial board has enjoyed an unhealthy helping of Harvard men and a large number of Catholics. Of course this sensibility is not one all Catholics or all Harvard men find appealing, nor is it limited to them. Its practitioners include WASPs and overassimilated Jews, Princetonians and college dropouts, and others who have become too comfortable in their own sense of superiority. McFadden and Lebowitz are neither male, Catholic nor Crimson, but they share the Lampoon's vantage point. They ridicule from a distance. They never turn the epee toward their own hearts. Although their humor is more amusing and, especially in McFadden's case, more compassionate than the *Lampoon*'s, they too are content to poke at the surface. Their humor is not profound and their targets are too easy. Like the *Lampoon*, their work is kids' stuff.

What's wrong with the new militance of smokers.

Ashtray Libertarians

by James Fallows

I've always been interested in cigarettes. Around the dinner table in the Fallows household, we children would wait for my father, a doctor, to come home from work. When he dragged in late, it was sometimes because he bore news of the latest friend or neighbor in our small town undone by cancerous lung. After watching an operation in which such an organ was removed—"scraped out" is more like what happened, considering the texture of the diseased tissue—I never had any trouble keeping my mind on the subject of smoking and health.

Responsible argument on this subject, I realize, no longer dwells on grisly medical details, but operates instead on the plane of high philosophy: libertarian philosophy, to be exact, which contends that, even if smoking is bad for you, no one has a right to tell you to stop. Now that *The New Republic* has weighed in for the third time on this theme (with Judith Thomson's article, "A Smoker's Lament," last week), I would like to add a few words for the other side.

James Fallows, chief speechwriter for President Carter, will soon become Washington editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*. The opinions in this article do not necessarily reflect the policies of the President.

Let me begin with the Big Concession: I believe that any adult who chooses to smoke should have the right to do so. Given the lay of the modern social landscape, that is not so obvious a statement as it may seem. Everywhere you turn these days, there is something you're not allowed to do, simply because some people have decided that it's bad for you. If you're a motorcyclist, you can't ride without a helmet; if you're a kid, you can't buy dirty books; if you're overweight, you can't use cyclamates; if you're depressed, there are fences to keep you from jumping off the Golden Gate bridge, and police to arrest you if you survive.

There are differences among these restrictions, and among the debates they provoke. Sometimes the debate concerns the facts (whether cyclamates can really hurt you); sometimes, the rationale (whether you should have to wear a motorcycle helmet, even though everyone agrees you're safer with it on). What they have in common is one unmistakable message: that our society recognizes no principle of unfettered liberty to tamper with one's own well-being. Perhaps society should recognize such a principle, but it doesn't, and it is specious to suggest that cigarettes are the uniquely persecuted exception to some general libertarian rule.

Moreover, if there is any kind of behavior over which

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these familiar restrictions are most common, it is the category to which smoking belongs—that of taking substances into the body: food, drug and drink. It is not enough for those who want to use Laetrile to prove that it will do them no harm, which is more than could be said for cigarettes. They also must prove that it will help cure them of cancer—a standard few substances can meet—before the Food and Drug Administration will let them go ahead. Amid the regulations that require new drugs to submit to endless animal tests, amid the laws that have already chased cyclamates from the marketplace and now have saccharin on the run, it is inconceivable that tobacco would ever be legalized if a new Sir Walter Raleigh were to introduce it tomorrow. So if one says, as I do, that adults should be free to smoke, it is not because our society adheres to the belief that people should be masters of their own medical fate. It is rather recognition that common sense sometimes requires us to allow common entrenched habits a degree of toleration that logical consistency would neither require nor permit. It "works" to ban cyclamates—but it didn't work to ban alcohol, and it wouldn't work to ban cigarettes, so it is foolish to try. But to make cigarettes a point of principle is to ignore the hundred departures from that principle that most liberals, at least, calmly accept.

I have a second concession, which is that smokers are right to detect a certain snottiness in the current campaign against them. There is nothing more revolting than hearing about someone else's good habits, especially when the purpose of the telling is to shame you about craven habits of your own. Judith Thomson is mad at non-smokers but they're not the only offenders; I will strangle the next person who tells me about his/her jogging or his abstinence from cholesterol and dangerous additives.

But much as one may sympathize with the smoker's complaint about the unfair social stigma, it is worth remembering the aspect of divine retribution here. It was not so long ago—just before the 1964 Surgeon General's report in fact—that the stigma worked the other way. To smoke, in those days, was to become more sophisticated and urbane—to partake of the same knowing charm that oozed from proto-smokers such as Humphrey Bogart and Edward R. Murrow, before their unfortunate deaths from lung cancer. If my experience is any guide, most people who start smoking in high school do so precisely because it provides an extra social crutch. If you can't be a star quarterback or get rid of your acne, you can at least try to look like a grown-up by putting a cigarette in your mouth.

As it happens, the most irritating excesses of the anti-smoking mania also contain a noble element missing from the more rational, libertarian approach. The most vigorous missionaries are not those who have never smoked, but rather the reformed sinners, such as Joseph Califano. If smokers find Califano's preaching excessive, they might reflect that at least it shows he cares. The more usual reaction from those who have never smoked is to ignore the whole issue as long as the smoke is not blowing right into their faces. That may be right in strict philosophical terms, but it's wrong in human terms. As a friend has put it, this amounts to saying, "Go ahead and kill yourself, you dumb asshole, but don't do it on the elevator."

That is the end of my concession list. Now it's time for the limitations.

The right I mentioned before—every adult's right to choose—reaches its limit when it runs into another right, that of the innocent bystander not to be subjected to a nuisance. I can't use my chainsaw at midnight, even if that might suit my convenience, because it does not suit the convenience of the three dozen families who live within earshot of my home. I can't let my dog run off the leash; I can't take my child into fancy restaurants and stores; I must lose precious minutes on the way to work because traffic regulations forbid me to take a shortcut through a neighborhood dense with children.

In each case, my rights are compromised—as the smoker's are when No Smoking signs go up. That is unfair; but it would be far less fair to set the balance the other way. It is not up to my neighbors to soundproof their houses against my chainsaw—and it should not be up to me to avoid all public places where my hair and clothes will become impregnated with tobacco smoke. This is not a question of health, but a question of simple physical nuisance. I have no more right to blow smoke in your face than to blow a cornet in your ear. The concept of nuisance applies to both, and the moral burden should be on the one doing the annoying. It might be different if 99 percent of the people carried cornets—or if, as often seems to be the case in Europe, 99 percent of the people smoked. There are fewer non-smoking laws in Europe, and with good reason. Smoking in public is not a question of moral absolutes—like your right to speak your mind, no matter how unpopular your opinion, or your right to choose to smoke at all. It is rather a subject for practical calculations of the relative compromises each side must make. Smokers make up less than 40 percent of the adult population in this country, and I know of no principle of justice that requires all the rest to submit themselves to nuisance merely for the convenience of the few.

So far this argument has had nothing to do with medical matters. These restrictions would apply if smoking were no different than wearing an especially potent perfume, or carrying Limburger cheese in your hat. There are no laws against indulging in the habits in public places, but only because they are relatively rare. But smoking is different, and not simply because it is more common. We often hear about the carnage wrought by the automobile—and about the taxes, restrictions, arrests, auto recalls and propaganda campaigns dedicated to reducing that toll. Traffic

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deaths are staggering; they amount to about 50,000 a year in this country. To use the most familiar comparison, that is equal to all the American fatalities through all the years of the Vietnam War.

The current death rate from lung cancer—which was virtually unknown at the beginning of this century, before cigarettes became widespread—is about 90,000 people a year, and it is increasing more quickly than any other major cause of death. Fifteen years ago, when only 40,000 people were dying of lung cancer each year, the Surgeon General estimated that an additional 200,000 smokers died prematurely of heart disease, assorted cancers, hypertension and other disorders that smoking made worse. If the same proportions hold today, half a million people will die prematurely this year because of smoking. That is 10 times as many as are killed in automobiles. In the judgment of almost everyone outside the Tobacco Institute, the single most effective way to improve the public health—and hold down the cost of medical care—would be to make inroads against smoking. Even smokers agree. Studies conducted in the late 1960s indicated that 80 to 90 percent of adult smokers wish they could stop.

Finally, there has long been evidence that the various ills of smoking may be visited, in much milder form, upon those who are subjected to "involuntary smoking," in the elevator or the meeting room. The clearest evidence of harm to nonsmokers comes from studies concerning children who grow up in households where their parents smoke.

In other words, we aren't talking about Limburger cheese. We are talking about something that kills more people in his country than any other identifiable cause, war included; that may do harm to the innocent; that is 10 times as destructive as the fearsome automobile. Anyone who chooses to smoke should be free to do so. But if we all encounter restrictions when boating, driving, or riding our motorcycles, how surprising or offensive can it be to encounter more restrictions when undertaking this vastly more perilous activity?

Now let's return to the libertarian argument about smoking in public places. Judith Thomson uses a strained analogy concerning a man who objects to the smell of coffee grounds, but there is an analogy much more directly on point. Wherever you find a public place in France, you will also find a sign, "Defense de Cracher"—No Spitting. That sign is not there because of any passion for decorum, but because public health officials observed during the 19th century that tuberculosis rates went down when people did not spread their sputum in public places. They were operating, at the time, on a hunch; having not yet discovered that bacillus that causes tuberculosis, they hardly knew that the germs in spit were to blame. It is the same kind of hunch that now leads public health officials to conclude that, if smoking is bad for the smoker, it probably also does harm to those who breathe his or her exhaled smoke. In each case, these hunches mean that rights are infringed upon—the right to smoke, the right to spit. But it would be a sorer infringement to inflict on others the risk of harm. In this imperfect world, compromises must always be struck; and common sense must always favor the bystander's right not to be exposed to harm over someone else's right to inflict that harm. This is the rationale, for example, of laws against carrying handguns—legal in your own home—on the street. Two other deviations from libertarianism seem sensible to me. The first operates when children are involved. The basic faith of libertarian philosophy is that reasoning beings should be allowed to choose for themselves—even if they choose unwisely. With that I have no quarrel. My quarrel is with applying it to children, precisely because they are not reasoning beings, and cannot foresee the consequences of their acts. An adult should be free to drink a can of Drano, knowing that it will lead to his death. A child should not be allowed to play with Drano, since he has no earthly idea of what effect it may have. No sane parents allow their children to learn by trial and error about playing in the street or on the railroad track—nor should they let children freely experiment and "decide for themselves" about cigarettes. I have never heard it claimed that children grow up deprived if they grow up without an addiction to cigarettes—but I have seen studies showing that smokers are five times as likely to develop cancer if they begin at 15 than at 25. Therefore, why not do everything possible to keep children from becoming smokers, just as we do everything possible to inoculate them against polio and teach them how to read?

My other deviation concerns the world of publishing. As one who has lived before, and hopes to live again, off the revenues of magazines, I am reluctant to attack my source of livelihood. If it comes to a choice—as it often does—between keeping a valuable publication going and turning down an ad, I wouldn't hesitate one second before deciding to keep the publication alive. But as soon as I saw any financial breathing space at all, I would use it to turn down ads for products—most notably cigarettes—that could only hurt my readers.

I would feel justified in doing so, because I would know this was not a question of censoring *political* points of view. When it comes to political arguments, publishers should feel an almost absolute obligation to let advertisers have their say. I would feel as obligated to publish an ad from the PLO or from the Ku Klux Klan as one from an organization much closer to the political mainstream. But I have never heard of any such obligation that applies to *commercial* products—and publishers show every day that they agree. Usually they exercise censorship on aesthetic or moral grounds. When was the last time you saw a lurid condom ad in *The Washington Post*, or one of those grimy bust-developer ad in *Town and Country*? By the same

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standards, publishers should feel free to say no to Marlboro and Kools. *The New Yorker, The Christian Science Monitor, Scientific American* and *The Reader's Digest* all do.

I suspect we'd see more publications following their lead if the advertising budget for cigarettes were the same as that for ginseng tea. But then, I also suspect we'd hear a lot less libertarian philosophy if the addiction to tobacco were easier to shed.

A call to people of culture—Subscribe!

The Readers of Serious Magazines

by Henry Fairlie

The survival of serious political and literary journals, weeklies and monthlies, is at least one cheering phenomenon in our cultural landscape. They may live from hand to mouth, and need saints to support them financially, but somehow they get published. One of the most distinguished British weeklies, the *Spectator*, this month celebrates 150 years of continuous publication; simultaneously the monthly review, *Encounter*, is observing its first quarter of a century. The survival of each is an achievement. But an equal achievement is that they are both still recognizably what they set out to be. Their anniversary issues make us realize what we would miss if the serious magazines faded away. It is very hard to imagine the English-speaking traffic of ideas without them.

Britain seems to me, in this respect, more fortunate than America. In spite of its much smaller population, it sustains three lively serious weeklies—the *Spectator, The Economist*, the *New Statesman*—and this does not take into account *The Listener*, which republishes the better talks and interviews broadcast by the BBC. I cannot count three of similar quality in America. Britain also has the *Times Literary Supplement*. *TLS* still quaintly thinks that its main task is to review books, and so is almost indispensable to the real follower of literature, whereas the *New York Review of Books*, firm in the conviction that the reviewer is more important than the book, is very dispensable to all except its contributors and their coteries.

But there is enough similarity between the two countries to make points that apply to them both. The anniversary issues of both *Encounter* and the *Spectator* carry articles that address the difficulties of the serious journals, and in doing so they raise important questions about the condition of our culture. Such magazines have to beg, borrow and steal to survive, and few have ever broken even. There is nothing new in that. But where is the larger audience that once seemed to be promised by the extension of higher education? Where are the readers that were expected from the newer and enlarged universities? The dread answer comes back that perhaps they cannot read. It is this, not the actual financial loss, that confounds us all.

The *Spectator* touches on the question in its anniversary editorial: "The material progress of Great Britain in the last quarter of a century and a half has not been matched by an equivalent intellectual and moral progress." There is a harsher way of putting this: as people have become more affluent, they have not become more interested in serious things, or more eager to read about them. The founder of the *Spectator* in 1828 said that it was addressed to "men of culture." His successors say today that, although the phrase may seem elitist to some, they see no reason to disown it. "And we do not doubt that such a readership will continue to exist." I don't doubt that it will continue to exist in America as well. But in both countries it contracts or at best stays about the same size, instead of expanding with the greater opportunities of a more prosperous and supposedly more enlightened people. The "man of letters," as he used to be called, is a species in decline.

Being in decline in our societies, the "man of culture" withers in each of us as well. But something remains—a hunger in us, left unsatisfied by today's newspapers, and of course by television. This is where one would expect the serious magazines to count. So what has happened? In the anniversary issue of *Encounter*, Goronwy Rees addresses himself to this point with his usual composed astringency. He notes the enlargement and multiplication of universities, but he is not content to make the more obvious criticisms of them. Instead he

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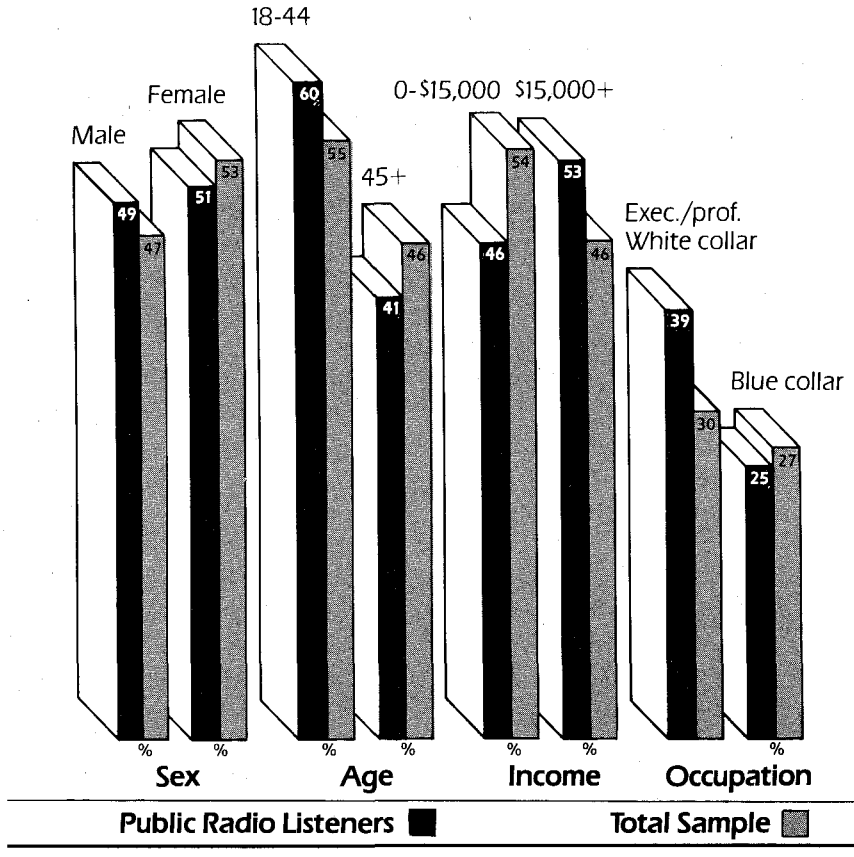

This graph is misleading.

Oh, the figures are correct. They come from a recent survey conducted by the Roper Organization. We wanted to compare **National Public Radio's** listening audience to that of the national profile. What we found were only minor variations. For instance, **NPR** attracts more men, and our audience is generally much younger than you might expect. There are also a few surprises in the occupational group. But, on the whole, there are no dramatic differences.

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criticizes the importance that we give to the universities in our culture. "The universities' growing monopoly of the available supply of intellectual talent, which is never unlimited, and of disinterested intellectual enquiry, in certain respects represents an impoverishment of the intellectual life of society as a whole." In a sense in which Matthew Arnold was not using the word, but which has some direct relationship to what he was saying, the Academy has come to dominate our intellectual and cultural life.

If we are not at universities, or supported by foundations, or both, we do not qualify as *experts*. And it is only people whom we think are experts who are thought to count. "There is the growing specialization in all fields of knowledge," Rees says, "which threatens to make discussion of them the monopoly of a privileged academic class and not, as it should be, a distinctive feature of a healthy democratic society." He argues that "the specialization of knowledge is a threat to us all unless there exist organs of intellectual discussion in which its results can be made available to those who are not specialists, in which specialization can itself be exposed to criticism and be called to account when it tends to make knowledge a possession of the few and not of the many." He claims with justice that *Encounter* for 25 years has tried to perform this task. So have the other serious journals, including *The New Republic*.

Yet we are so overawed by the specialist today that sometimes even in editorial conferences of *The New Republic* the raising of some knotty problem will produce the temptation to ask the expert at MIT or wherever to write about it, whereas the generally cultivated journalist who is used to popularizing without vulgarizing would in fact do a much better job.

For almost a quarter of a century, my writing has found its main outlet in these serious journals, on both sides of the Atlantic, certainly the writing for which I most care. I have contributed to three fistfuls of them with varying degrees of regularity and common sense, and have withdrawn my services at least as often as they have asked me to withdraw my services. I certainly would not recommend them as the basis of a freelance career for anyone who is primarily interested in a large income. But nowhere else could I have written regularly as I wish to write for so many years. To me they are one of the essential foundations of all good journalism. The *Spectator* puts this point in an interesting way when it notes that "the weeklies have provided a special function of rearing up journalists for other papers"—a sentence which shows how far the Americanization of English prose has gone, since one does not *provide* but *performs* a function, and the preposition "up" after the quite self-sufficient "rearing" is a wholly American form. Oh, *Spectator*!

But the weeklies will perform their function as nurseries for the newspaper only if they send journalists to them who are imbued with their own standards, and not the other way round, letting the ambitious young journalists imbue them with the standards of the newspapers on which they already have their eyes. The weeklies and monthlies have no place for the budding Woodwards and Bernsteins, and they should not send prematurely sere Bernsteins and Woodwards to the large newspapers especially when Woodward and Bernstein have withered so early themselves.

Many of the contributors to the anniversary issues of *Encounter* and the *Spectator* have appeared persistently in their pages over the years. Among all the best regular writers for the weeklies, in both America and Britain, there has always been this feeling of belonging to a rare guild, with standards of its own, where they feel most at home as journalists, and always keep at least one foot even when they stray to graze from richer pastures. Its writers are the heart of a weekly. Reporters and even columnists on newspapers are replaceable. If they dropped dead tomorrow, for the most part, others could stand in their shoes. Indistinguishably. This is not true of the writers on weeklies.

This is one reason why we accept the relatively small remunerations for our efforts—although they do not seem small as that unless one has become very greedy. Central to the relationship of the writer to his weekly is his relationship to its readers. He feels that he knows them, in an unusually intimate way, as they seem to know him, even as they pour fire and brimstone on him. He can afford to make allusions and references with no explanation. He can write as he best likes to write: the reader will read as he best likes to read. He feels not that mind is engaged with mind, or prejudice with prejudice, so much as that attitude is engaged with attitude. In writing for *The New Republic*, I feel that certain decencies are so shared—such as that the poor are daily in our care, or that one does not take a criminal's life as punishment—that they can almost be taken for granted. Only rarely does one feel this on a newspaper. For the most part, one feels only jostled by its readers, as of course one only jostles them.

The *Spectator* says that the weeklies have "taken on the role of commentator, stimulant, and irritant," and each of those words is acceptable. But the commentary, the stimulation and the irritant have to be administered within some common, assumed, and recognized frame of standards. *The New Republic* cannot assume the tone of voice of *National Review*, or *Rolling Stone*, or for that matter of *The Washington Monthly*. When I tried to describe the American liberal in these pages in 1976, I was of course describing the readers of *The New Republic*, as I had come to know them only as one of its readers myself. With all my irritation at what seemed and still seem to me some of their simplicities, they seemed and still seem to me the kind of people I would expect to find next to me on the barricades, and even more importantly on the same side on most questions in any free

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assembly. The kindest people in the world in their private lives can nonetheless be mean on public issues—the besetting fault of conservatives when they are freed from all liberal tethers. A lack of public meanness—not using the example of the welfare cheat, for example, to deprive the welfare needy—is the kind of test which the serious journals are able to apply. For a very clear voice comes back from their readers week in and week out.

One sort of reader of the writers of serious journals is a character of strange importance. The people who support the serious weeklies and monthlies with their own money, or their children's, or their great aunts', have often seemed to me to be eccentric even to the borders of lunacy. I have known many of them. There was Lady Rhondda, who kept alive a rather civilized conservative journal called *Time and Tide* with her dead husband's pickings from his Welsh coal mines. There was an unfrocked priest who obviously had passed over Jesus's injunction to rid himself of his worldly spoils. There was an ambitious politician who now languishes in the shadow cabinet of Mrs. Thatcher's loyal and permanent opposition. And now there is a Zionist of unpredictable wider interests who sometimes sends us up the Wailing Wall. These are miraculous people to have around. I cannot praise their selflessness—motives are mixed—but I can praise their ambition. For whatever reason they originally bought their magazines, they come to wish the magazine to be itself and to be successful, and they assume a care for it and for its writers and readers far beyond the call of duty.

I have seen it happen again and again in a quarter of a century. With very few exceptions among the many I have known—and battled with—these proprietors have one unobvious and undisclosed motive. They are people who enjoy the free play of ideas. They grow to relish their writers who can express ideas—even when their ideas conflict with their own—and so they form a vital connection between the writers and the readers. For they do not just lose as much money as they can afford, and then get out without having done very much. They come in as revolutionaries—to turn the magazine and the world around in 52 issues—and they end as conservers. They preserve the continuity of their magazines, even as they try to alter them to the times, or to meet their own prepossessions. *Encounter* and the *Spectator* are today, I said at the beginning, recognizably what they set out to be. Yet look at the number of hands the *Spectator* has passed through in its history—and the different kinds of hands! And look at the diverse sources to which *Encounter* has had to reach over the years to survive. When one thinks of where these proprietors might have taken their money, even the most wary of their hacks may bow to them with grace if not surrender.

Newspapers are only buffeted by readers who are unknown to them, except as a circulation that is tabulated by their managers. This is why the newspapers have so fecklessly changed their characters in the past few years. The staffs of serious magazines are small. This smallness means that an unusual relationship develops with the magazine and with its readers, whether one is a member of the staff or only a contributor who wanders in and out, so that one feels responsible not only for one's own article but for the whole magazine. This is most clear in Britain, since London is the hub of both the political and literary worlds, and contributors to the magazines tend to use them as clubs, and saunter in and out. The lunatic proprietors of these operations stand far closer to both the writers and the readers, and indeed to the *soul* of the magazine, than the proprietor of any newspaper. It is after all their money that they are investing and, if this is sometimes the cause of strain, it is a strain which tells of the intensely personal character of the magazines, and the strong impact of each reader. If your circulation is small, every reader lost is a swallow, every one that is gained is a prodigal son.

"The weeklies have another function," says the *Spectator*; "campaigning for causes." Although this is true, and although the influence of the serious magazines, in taking the lead in causes, has been far greater than that of any newspapers, I think it misplaces the emphasis. The cause that in the end keeps their heads above water, and still binds their readers to them, is maintaining the tone of voice of "men of culture," which the "media" do not do—and the serious magazines are emphatically not a part of the lumped-together "media." This cause has been put no better than by George Hutchinson in the *Spectator:*

> *I personally have faith in the future of the weeklies—and I know something about their economics as well as the editorial aspects. There is, I believe, a durable if not permanent minority who like and value good writing, considered, unhurried argument and sound information presented at substantial length when occasion requires, free from irrelevance and invested with the independent expert authority frequently encountered among their contributors.*

(Not, I would add, among the experts.) The historian Robert Blake says that the *Spectator* "has certainly proved these features over the first hundred and forty years of its existence. There is no reason why it should not continue to do so for the second." Goronwy Rees concludes with much the same hopeful prediction for the continued existence of *Encounter*. As an indefatigable reader of the back numbers of *The New Republic*—now 64 years old in a country that is barely three times its age—it seems worth saying to someone who has known all these weeklies that the same holds true of *TNR*. Am I wrong in thinking that on both sides of the Atlantic people of culture may be stirring again? And may even be willing to subscribe?

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Arts and Lives

Stanley Kauffmann on films

A Difference in Ages

Can the film do *everything*? Eric Rohmer, a film artist of high rank, is trying to find out. In his *Moral Tales*, such as *Claire's Knee* and *Chloe in the Afternoon*, he explored what might be called the "still" cinema, which was nonetheless cinematic. The power of these films came from tension between surface stillness and the spiritual-moral passion they enclosed. The *Moral Tales* were daring in ways more sophisticated than obviously radical editing or overt abstraction, and they succeeded wonderfully, as do certain kinds of fiction and poetry, by creating an inner space that included us in a drama of privacy. Thus Rohmer extended the possibilities of film.

Then he succeeded with another kind of extension, in *The Marquise of O*. Here he wanted to recreate a masterwork of one art in another, obviously not just to tell the story, which any competent director could have done, but to find cinematic equivalents for the very prose and pulse of the original, the matters that distinguish Kleist's novella from a synopsis of it. Rohmer accomplished this by a discreet use of the theatrical style of the novella's period, together with a camera distance and a rhythm that fixed us—transfixed us—at a certain distance from the film as we moved forward inescapably with it. It was another enlargement of the medium.

Now, with equal courage and ambition, Rohmer has tried something even more difficult: he has tried to enter the Middle Ages through medieval eyes. For many years he has loved Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval*, a 12th-century poem about the Arthurian knight and the Holy Grail. (Perceval is Parsifal, but Chrétien's hero is very different from Wagner's, although Wagner's source, Wolfram von Eschenbach, derived from Chrétien.) Rohmer made his own translation into modern French rhymed verse, adapted it, and filmed it; now *Perceval* (Gaumont/New Yorker) presents the poem, which was very popular in its era, as Rohmer thinks its era imagined it when reading or hearing it.

To this conviction he is inarguably entitled. Certainly his settings and proportions follow those in medieval painting and sculpture, and as E. H. Gombrich has told us, perception varies from age to age, depending on contemporary cultural context. Few medievalists would argue against the accuracy of Rohmer's rendition, nevertheless that still leaves unanswered the question of how medieval people saw the world. They, like us, had the evidence of their eyes about the relative sizes of men and buildings, and the fact that their artists changed that relation must be taken (I risk "must") more as an index of current skills in perspective and of current traditions in art than as a realistic rendering of the world roundabout. Every age in art distorts, whether it's the distortion of Delacroix or of Modigliani, but it's a big jump from that fact to the assumption that ordinary citizens saw the world—or flexed their imaginations—like Delacroix and Modigliani. And that assumption is even bigger, I would say, in regard to the 12th century where painters had a smaller range of modal options. Maybe the first viewers of Giotto's frescoes in Padua thought: "Exquisite. Isn't it interesting how painters change the world around us?"

What's more relevant is an answerable question: can Rohmer's view of the medieval view be accommodated in film? For me, I'm afraid the answer is no. Even if we accept Rohmer's view that medieval paintings tell us how medieval people "saw," we are still left with the uncongeniality of film to that view. Those paintings were done in an age when photography couldn't have been conceived of or unconsciously yearned for; and those proportions simply don't transpose to a magnifying medium of immense immediacy which has accustomed our eyes to realistic proportions. *Perceval* combines real people and real horses with toy castles and small stylized trees, and the effect is just the opposite of what Rohmer could have wanted: it's cute. And it's cute for only a short time because nothing can be cute for a long time.

Rohmer has tried to obviate realistic expectation in us by using presentational devices that don't attempt illusion. The lighting is mostly theatrical: it doesn't relate to a source, like the sun or lamps, it treats the characters as actors and the sets as scenery. All the elements in the film are put in the same plane. The musical score is *shown*: in fact, the first shot, a consort of six musicians in costume, is lovely. Perceval and other characters speak the impersonal narrative lines that connect their passages of dialogue, and all the lines, including dialogue, are in Rohmer's rhymed verse.

Self-evidently, what Rohmer wanted was to make the prime medium of a technological age serve as agent for the spirit of a non-technological age, one that was theocratic. It was a harder job than Bergman's in *The Virgin Spring*, which dealt with some medieval events that are cognate with today's events. But all through *Perceval* I felt the medium itself rejecting Rohmer. When this medium deviates from realism (except-

Films Worth Seeing

Autumn Sonata. Ingmar Bergman at near-best. Ingrid Bergman and Liv Ullmann as contesting mother and daughter are excellent.

The Buddy Holly Story. Pleasant biography of singer-composer. Despite rock and sad ending, some feeling of Harold Lloyd.

Girlfriends. Claudia Weill's first film. New York women today. Truth and talent vitalize familiar material.

Go Tell the Spartans. Vietnam 1964. Not free of war-movie touches, but it really is about that war.

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ing animated film) it succeeds by building outward from its strengths. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is today mainly of historical interest only, because its expressionist scenery is inorganic to the medium, looks impasted on it: but the climactic scene of *M*, the trial scene, is still overwhelming even though the setting is an abstraction because that abstraction grows subtly from verism to Fritz Lang's version of it. Like *Caligari* in that respect, *Perceval* remains outside the medium, its presentational devices unabsorbed and uncommunicated. Rohmer's serious religious-historical purpose is reduced to a series of tasteful Christmas cards.

I have mournfully to add that most of the acting and action only lumbers the picture further. Rohmer asserts that Fabrice Luchini is the perfect Perceval, without whom he would not have made the film. But far from the boyish, fervent, winning yet somehow comic Perceval, Luchini seems to me less naive than goofy, especially next to the appealing Gawain of André Dussolier.

The structure is peculiar. Chrétien inserted adventures of Gawain that don't concern Perceval; Rohmer follows this (for us) questionable suit. Just before the conclusion, he includes a reenactment of Christ's Passion, stylized to fit the film. This, he says in an interview (*Film Comment*, Sept./Oct., '78), is to balance the beginning. "Perceval, in the beginning, believes that God is a warrior, and in the end he realizes that God is a victim, a man humiliated, beaten." But I got this point from the interview, not from the film.

A fine artist, a rare and valuable man, has, in my view, tried something the film can *not* do. All power to his future.

A lot of us have been waiting for Jack Nicholson's next picture, and at last it has arrived. Just barely. *Goin' South* (Paramount), which Nicholson also directed, is boring after about the sixth minute, an especially irritating bore because there's an idea in it for a good Nicholson picture. In the Old West, a Texas town has an ordinance allowing an unmarried woman to save a condemned outlaw from the gallows by taking him as her husband. That's a good springboard for a comedy, but Nicholson has handed it to four dud writers, he directs without any awareness that he has no awareness of pace, and he acts with no clue—no interest in any clue—about the man he is playing. The others in the cast are presumably friends of his. I can't imagine any other reason for hiring them.

We hear a lot about the superiority of film to theater. Well, if *Goin' South* were a play, it could be closed out-of-town, new writers, a new director, new supporting actors could be brought in, and it might have a chance. But since it's a film, it's finished.

Note of Hope. At the New York Film Festival I saw the film that Peter Handke made from his novel *The Left-handed Woman*. How I hope that it will be generally released soon, that I can see it again, that I can write about it. It's extraordinary.

James Lardner on television

The New Season: II

It will go down in the record books as ABC 23.6, NBC 17.5 and CBS 17. Those were the nationwide Nielson ratings for September 26th from 9 to 11 p.m., with ABC's usual Tuesday night lineup of "Three's Company," "Taxi" and "Starsky and Hutch" up against NBC's "Battered" (a made-for-TV movie about marital violence) and CBS's "One in a Million" (a biography of ex-con-turned-outfielder Ron LeFlore). Some may deplore the fact that ABC's humdrum series gave two exceptional programs such a trouncing. But even the lower ratings earned by "Battered" and "One in a Million" represent about 13 and 12.7 million households respectively. That's a lot of households.

The "Battered" figures, in particular, mean that Americans held a kind of mass meeting that night to consider the phenomenon of husbands who habitually assault their wives—subject matter as revolutionary for television as alcoholism was for movies when "The Lost Weekend" appeared in 1945.

It *is* deplorable, given their scarcity, that two intelligent programs on serious subjects should air simultaneously, and not be repeated in the foreseeable future—not sufficiently soon, at any rate, to derive much benefit from word of mouth. Comparing notes on last night's TV shows is among the most popular of American workplace customs; but recommendations can help on the series and mini-series, since there is no telling when anything else (except on public TV, which routinely reschedules major programs) will reappear. Of course, that's a large part of why series continue to dominate the medium.

The gloomy statistics on convicted criminals in this country make it easy to forget that a fraction of those who enter our "revolving door" criminal justice system, like Ron LeFlore, push their way right through and out and don't come back (nor do such eccentrics always have the incentive of a superstar-sized salary). As depicted in the TV version of his story, LeFlore saw the pointlessness of his criminal life while doing five to ten years for robbery—in fact, while in solitary confinement for being a troublemaker even by prison standards. Such things happen. But neither his own spectacular success nor his earnest proselytizing could divert a younger brother from dealing drugs and, ultimately, dying with a police bullet inside him. Such things also happen.

"One in a Million" had some of the richest ghetto slang ever presented on commercial TV (full of words like "motormouth"), and demonstrated that when dialogue is plausible on other counts, a little sanitizing need not rob it of all credibility. Of course, a line of dialogue is only as plausible as the actor who delivers it, but "One in a Million" (with the unfortunate exception of "Roots" star LeVar Burton as LeFlore himself) had an outstanding cast.

Blacks seem to have achieved fair numerical representation on our TV screens, but they are still the victims of separate and unequal treatment when it comes to the standards for writing, directing and acting imposed on such hit series as "What's Happening," "Good Times" and "The Jeffersons." "One in a Million" was a happy exception to this rule.

"Battered," the product of star Karen Grassle's original concept, presented parallel stories of four violent married couples—four husbands with explosive

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tempers and four wives becoming helpless or not-so-helpless objects of those tempers. Temper and its management is a subject carefully avoided by television. The husbands and wives of some of the leading situation comedies routinely badger and insult each other, but not from loss of temper; that is their normal temper. TV violence usually results from the premeditated actions of malevolent people. "Battered" was a reminder that a high proportion of real violence results from a loss of control on the part of people with more mixed motives.

Some critics faulted "Battered" for failing to explore the cause of the brutality it dramatized. But the "how" and the "why" of such matters can be hard to separate. In one nonviolent scene, Grassle, as the wife of a 40-ish go-getter played by Mike Farrell, delicately tried to tell her husband she wanted a small car for herself instead of the used Lincoln he had set his sights on. Farrell looked like he could have hit her right there, although he didn't. The expression on his face, however, announced that he could not tolerate even this trivial act of resistance to his will. "It's too good to pass up," said Farrell with finality.

Here was someone desperately depending on his wife to support a wishful image of himself as a man with a sure grip on life. A similar sense that a wife is somehow undermining a man's self-image has angered a few husbands of my acquaintance and perhaps a few of yours. "Battered" showed how easily such flashes of anger can, in some men, turn to violence directed against their wives.

"Battered" also showed, reassuringly, that TV has not yet succeeded in making violence eternally meaningless by off-hand treatment. When Farrell slapped Grassle for the first time—and went no further—the moment had more emotional force than all 4 seasons of Starsky and Hutch's bruising and bludgeoning.

"Bad Boys," a startling black-and-white documentary scheduled to air on PBS Sunday, October 29th, might have been called "Sons of Battered." Made by Alan and Susan Raymond, the team that produced "The Police Tapes," "Bad Boys" is a three-segment look at some of New York State's confirmed juvenile delinquents. (There must be a better term for them, but I can't think of one. Young sociopaths? Disgruntled youth? You try.)

The first segment deals with a crowd of Queens high school kids who spend their days hanging around the sidewalks and playground outside their school (known as "the serious joint"), which they enter as infrequently as possible. A favorite diversion is something broadly labelled "zooing."

"Whenever you're in the mood to zoo, you zoo," explains a spokesman for the group.

The second segment was filmed at the Spofford Youth Center in the Bronx, where the detention of juveniles supposedly costs $65,000 a year apiece. The detainees like Spofford, or so several of them claim. One is grateful he doesn't have to go back to that "other place" upstate "where they got trees and raccoons and stuff."

"You don't like that?" he is asked.

"No," says the juvenile. He knows what he likes.

The third segment was filmed at Brookwood, a maximum security prison for juveniles—a place with a large sign posted in the infirmary that cautions, "Please do not give THORAZINE when child is withdrawing." An inmate taking an electricity class throws a fit when told to interrupt his lab exercise for a brief explanation from a textbook. "I don't learn nothing from no damn book!" he declares. "I learn from doing it."

Hannah Arendt: The Jewish Question

In the mind of the Jewish community in this century Hannah Arendt occupies a position comparable to that attained by Karl Marx a century ago. Respect for her brilliance has become compromised by the suspicion that a rejection of Jewish identity and Judaism went hand in hand with the contributions of this otherwise admirable thinker. In the case of Marx, that suspicion was correctly based on his 1843 essay "On The Jewish Question." The force of the suspicion in Hannah Arendt's case is less severe; so is the evidence for it. Nevertheless, how does one reconcile the moral attraction of works like *The Human Condition* and *Between Past and Future* with the widespread hostility evoked by Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*? Even though a dispassionate reading of the Eichmann book should suffice to dispel the cloud cast over Hannah Arendt by her critics, she continues to be a source of considerable intellectual discomfort for many Jewish intellectuals. This collection of essays, many of which first appeared in the 1940s and early 1950s, may mitigate their suspicion and concern.

When she died in 1975, the tributes offered in her memory reflected well the image of Hannah Arendt that had evolved since the *Origins of Totalitarianism* catapulted her to fame in 1951. She was seen as a "citizen of the world," an entirely cosmopolitan thinker whose Jewish origin was merely an incidental fact. For example, not one of the memorial papers delivered at the New School in New York (printed in *Social Research* Vol. 44, No. 1) discussed her relation to Jews and Jewish history. Bernard Crick in his laudatory retrospective on the *Origins* conceded that the 300 pages on anti-Semitism constituted a peculiar "lopsidedness" which could perhaps be explained by Arendt's implicit general philosophy of historical causality. That it derived from her personal concern for the world historical significance of the modern Jewish experience did not seem to occur to him.

The judgment on Hannah Arendt at the time of her untimely death was that she had been a great Western philosopher-historian who had transcended obscurity, hardship—and perhaps provincialism—and had emerged, deservedly so, into the center of the political discourse about the modern world. As Margaret Canovan, author of the first serious monograph on Arendt (1974) put it, "If any label at all were to be pinned on her, it could only be Republican . . . in the old eighteenth century sense of a partisan of public freedom, a companion of men like de Tocqueville, Jefferson and Machiavelli."

When one reads *The Jew As Pariah* (Grove Press; $12.50) one recognizes the enormous personal disservice and intellectual oversight that this common view of Arendt perpetuates. This book of Arendt's early essays—written for *The Menorah Journal, Jewish Social Studies,* and *The Jewish Frontier*—offers a new way of making sense not only of Arendt as Jew but also of Arendt's major work. In

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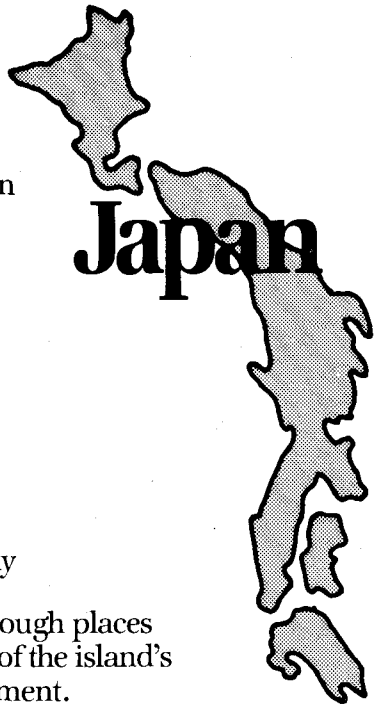

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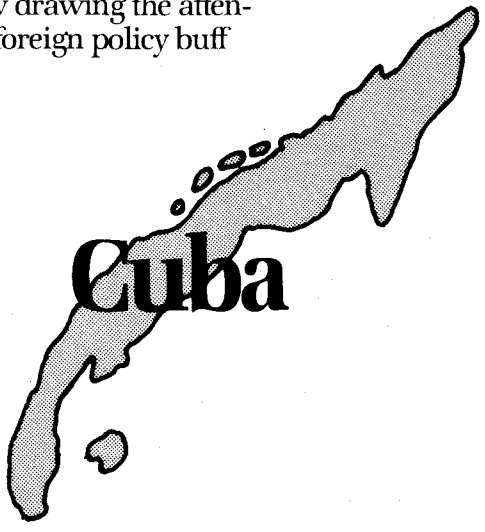

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her almost exclusive attention to Jewish issues from 1933-1951, Arendt formulated the bases of her understanding of the modern world and its political and ethical dilemmas. Her grasp of the meaning and consequence of her Jewish identity, in the presence of Nazism and subsequently at the moment of the birth of the State of Israel, shaped the elements of her political and philosophical outlook on non-Jewish matters. Arendt, rather than being yet another cosmopolitan intellectual, was a uniquely Jewish thinker. Her profound understanding of matters Jewish and her intense involvement over a decade and a half with Jewish politics provided her with the inspired attitude later displayed in her reflections on the condition of modern man (*The Human Condition*, 1958); in her interpretation of the American political condition (*On Revolution*, 1963); in her exploration of generic issues in political theory (*Between Past and Future*, 1961); in her discussions of specific modern intellectual personalities, Vietnam, and Watergate (*Men in Dark Times*, 1968 and *Crises of the Republic*, 1972); as well as in her last effort at writing philosophy (*Thinking* and *Willing*, 1978).

Arendt's attempts to grapple with the "Jewish Question" presented in *The Jew As Pariah* also cast new light on those of her works that address issues of Jewish history, the *Origins* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. The latter emerges as far less bizarre and incomprehensible to even the most skeptical of Jewish readers, and the supposed historical "lopsidedness" of the *Origins* begins to seem justified. I think, for example, that readers of this collection will be disabused of the notion that Arendt went to Jerusalem loaded for bear against Zionism, that she was unsympathetic to the Jews, that she reproached them for collaborating and not resisting. Indeed, I think that if the Eichmann book had been published with several of these essays, Arendt's primary concerns would have been clear from the start. How does radical evil become denatured and gain a normal banal appearance? How do average, even admirable, people become dehumanized by the critical circumstances pressing in on them? How can life in our time lose meaning and suicide become an act of affirmation? How is it that mere living and surviving can become morally problematic under conditions of extreme domination? Are Zionism and fundamental criticism of the state of Israel compatible? These fundamental themes of Arendt's thought are all adumbrated in *The Jew as Pariah*.

II

How do these Jewish essays assist our understanding of Arendt's later *non*-Jewish work? Consider *The Human Condition*, her seminal philosophical work, in which she posits her famous distinction between work and labor. Unlike labor, which is an alienating process, work is compatible with her desired ideal of the active life. The ideal *"vita activa"* calls for speech and action in the public realm, for the virtuous display of freedom by individuals on behalf of the human community. Arendt's ideal political vision stems from her belief that the loss of the opportunity to engage in an active political life was the most adverse consequence of the segregation of the Jews in modern history. The tragedy of the Jew as "pariah" in modern Europe was the depoliticization of the Jew.

In the 19th century the exacerbation of this pariah status of the Jew came about through seemingly benign forms, such as legal emancipation and economic and social assimilation. These did not, for Arendt, compensate for the separation of the Jew from the real world of political action and freedom. Jews substituted feelings of group solidarity and compassion and upward social and economic mobility for the loss of the political realm. To Arendt, economic and even social gains failed to pierce the fundamental illusion of assimilation and emancipation in the race-oriented modern world.

The fate of the Jews, the loss of political freedom, was really only a precursor of what race thinking and imperialism would eventually do after 1933 to all Europeans. As Arendt argues in the *Origins*, the ideals of a nation of laws, of political citizenship and of the rights of men—in the Enlightenment sense—were subverted. The 19th century bred fascism and totalitarianism, international movements which deprived men of their individuality and their capacity for freedom and action—precisely the Jewish experience. Modern history threatens to make pariahs of us all. As she wrote in 1943, ". . . the outlawing of the Jewish people has been followed closely by the outlawing of most European nations. . . ."

Since Arendt regarded the loss of the active life as the decisive dimension of the diaspora experience—her own experience—it is no accident that she chose as her lifelong guides the idealized ancient *polis* of free citizens and the Aristotelian view of man as a political animal. No wonder she parted ways with Marx on the political primacy of economics and "the social question" and continued to stress the autonomous political dimension of life. For it was this that the European Jews lacked. If the ultimate expression of man's potential nature was action and speech in a free political realm with ultimate ends in view—justice, virtue, freedom—then her interpretation of Marx's legacy as having undermined freedom, glorified labor (the process rather than the *telos* of life) appears not as a point within the conventional Marxist-non-Marxist ideological debate, but as a reflection of Jewish history. Her view of the desired direction for modern man, as offered in *The Human Condition*, points toward those virtues which the Jews were the first to be prevented from nurturing: free action and speech in the human community.

Arendt's concept of the pariah has, heretofore, chiefly been encountered by readers outside the context of Jewish topics in her title essay from *Men in Dark Times*. Written in 1958, it follows her approach of the 1940s to Jewish history. It also illuminates her version of the American Revolution as outlined in *On Revolution*. There she argues against compassion, the pariah's alternative to relating to fellow men through politics, as a motive for revolutionary or political organization and criticizes the obsessive emphasis of modern revolutionaries on social rather than political issues. Here again, her grasp of the Jewish question is decisive. The social agenda of the French Revolution—its stress on equality and fraternity—led, in Arendt's view, to social engineering as the priority of politics and race thinking as the basis of the nation-state. The stress on social and economic equality in politics highlighted the presumed social and economic privileges of the Jew and made him, despite legal political emancipation, a growing target of official and social hostility. The 19th century equation of race and nation made it clearly less likely that Jews could become citizens, equal partners in any non-Jewish nation. They were always outsiders, no matter how assimilated. The era of Robespierre prepared the way for the era of Dreyfus.

Arendt's critique of the French revolutionary tradition ties in with her analysis of the Dreyfus case in the *Origins*. They both derived from her perception of the broken promise of the 18th century—Jewish emancipation.

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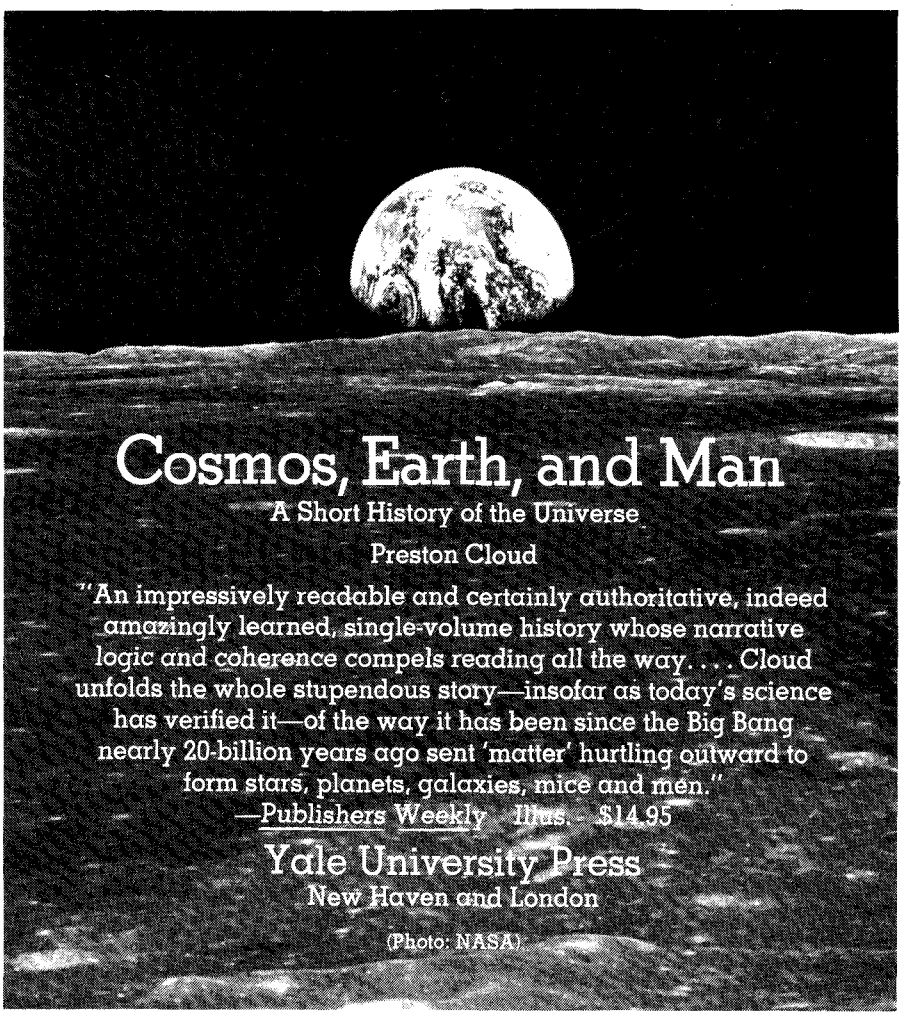
The promise rested on the ideals of the Enlightenment, on contract political theory, on the notions of Locke, Kant, and the Scottish Enlightenment. These ideals were thwarted both in France and Germany (as shown in 1933 by Arendt in her *Rahel Varnhagen*) by real and ideological circumstances. But in America, Arendt held, they remained substantially intact. This hotly contested view of America's revolutionary tradition and its consequences, best known in *On Revolution*, was first stated by the 41-year-old refugee in *The Jew As Pariah*. "The Jewish people of America . . . live a safe and reasonably free life. . . . The central and strongest part of diaspora Jewry no longer exists under the conditions of a nation-state but in a country that would annul its own constitution if ever it demanded homogeneity of population and an ethnic foundation for its state." A diaspora of Jews who proudly acted at once, as conscious Jews and as active citizens in the political life of a non-Jewish nation, was one of Arendt's lifelong dreams. It had failed to materialize on the continent but seemed possible in America. "In America one does not have to pretend that Judaism is nothing but a denomination and resort to all those desperate and crippling disguises. . . ." she wrote in 1941.

III

Arendt's early perspectives on Jewish history also throw light on the *Origins* and the Eichmann book. The essays in *The Jew As Pariah* and these two works share her concern for the rescue of man from oppression and dehumanization, from the loss of the will and the capacity to act and to create a new human community. All grapple with the need to somehow come to terms with evil, with the 20th-century moral collapse embodied in Hitler's Germany. All share the view of the Jew as escaping from political realities. The incompatibility of true political equality and ethnic heterogeneity in the modern European nation-states failed to sink into Jewish consciousness, formed patterns of denial behavior and surrogates for real membership in European society (fame, special professions, intellectual achievement, exotic personalities). The pariah became impotent to deal directly with the course of events. Following that line of thought, Arendt argued not that Jews "collaborated" with their own demise, or "failed to resist," but rather that they gradually and ultimately became victims, as did all of Europe, of a Nietzschean transvaluation of values which eventually led to totalitarianism. They lost all freedom, and with it the capacity for action. The distinction between good and evil became blurred. As Arendt *clearly* stated (in contrasting the European situation with the American), normal, compliant behavior became, under "circumstances beyond the control of the Jews," behavior in the service of an all-powerful evil. In this sense surviving, even in a concentration camp, that quintessential example of totalitarianism, could be perverted to distort the categories of right and wrong. Evil became banal, Arendt claimed in 1963, in that it ceased to be remarkable or exceptional. But even by the early 1940s she saw that victim and victimizers were linked in a morally degraded world, from which the victim could escape only by performing the miracle of starting anew, as she argued in the *Origins*. The miracle, from her vantage point in the years before 1945, would be surviving with the human capacity for political freedom and action intact.

It should therefore come as no surprise that Arendt had been an ardent Zionist, albeit not a conventional one. She worked for Zionist organizations in the 1930s and 1940s and wrote extensively on Herzl and the founding of Israel. Her commitment to Zionism was based on the fact that as a movement it had the power to break the pariah status and mentality of Jews. It held out the hope of a political arena; it allowed them to think of themselves as free political equals, in the human community. It posited a public realm present and future, for Jewish identity: "Politics is no longer the privilege of Gentiles." Zionism had the potential of bringing home to all Jews the lesson of the pariah experience that ". . . only in the framework of a people can man live among men, without exhausting himself. And only when a people care and function in concert with other peoples can it contribute to the establishment upon earth of a commonly conditioned and commonly controlled humanity."

Arendt, however, recognized spiritual difficulties in Zionism. As part of a "loyal opposition" to the prevailing leadership, she parted with Ben Gurion and Weizmann on the necessity of a Jewish state based on race and ethnic singularity. She distinguished the idea of a nation and a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homeland for the Jews on the one hand from the idea of a Jewish state on the other. For her, Zionism demanded the creation of a Jewish nation and homeland. As a nation, it could live in America and Palestine. Its homeland would be Palestine, where the Jew would develop a free political space, create a new Jewish self-image of action and pioneer in the development of better models of social organization, exemplified by the kibbutz. The Jews, victims of the past, could chart the way to a more just political and social order.

Obviously, Arendt had high aspirations for her own people. As victims of race thinking and ethnic nation-state politics, they ought not create a Jewish version of these evils. Since the "remnants of European Jewry now in the camps" were the "center" of Jewish politics, the moral imperative was to shed those political habits which Arendt thought contributed to the catastrophe.

In Palestine, as in America, Jews "will from now on depend on their own will." She thought the revisionists, as well as Ben Gurion and Weizmann, were demanding not Zionism *per se*, but a Zionist maximum: a Jewish State. She sided with proponents of a bi-national political entity: she wished for a Jewish nation in Palestine, one living in political cooperation and harmony with the Arab world. This vision of Zionism, while not the one which emerged from 1948, was certainly shared by many distinguished Jews. It was a vision which she associated with the turn-of-the-century French Zionist, Lazare, who, rather than Herzl, was one of her heroes.

Arendt's notion of a Jewish homeland as opposed to a Jewish state was not merely based on a philosophic and ethical view of the antecedents and consequences of the Holocaust. What is startling about the essays on Zionism and Israel collected in *The Jew As Pariah*, especially those written during the years of the partition and the war of independence, is the degree of practical wisdom and prophetic (from the vantage point of Camp David) judgment which shaped her vision. Arendt called for a bi-national state for pragmatic reasons. A Jewish state would be viewed as a foreign outpost of the West in a hostile Arab world. It would be overly dependent economically and politically on some great power, far less autonomous in international politics than it could be. The appearance of equality in the family of nations for Jews would be marred by the reality—the Jewish state as the subsidiary of a great power in a hostile local environment. Arendt thought that a Jewish state would eventually place American Jews in a domestically awkward position both as Jews and as Americans, as recent events of the years since the Arab boycott have certainly demonstrated. She predicted that the Jewish state would force Israel into investing altogether too much of its resources in the needs of an armed camp. Despite the radical idealism of the Kibbutz movement and of the socialist tradition in Zionism, Israel as a Jewish state, with its equation of full citizenship and race and its fuzzy relationship between religion and state, might come to be legally reactionary as a democracy, not part of the reforming political vanguard of the future. Arendt wanted desperately for the Jews to develop political equality with the other nations of the world on a superior ethical basis. Only bi-nationalism, with a democracy and an inter-ethnic definition of citizenship with the Arabs, could satisfy both the spiritual legacy of the Holocaust and the need for autonomy for the Jewish nation in its homeland.

Only a new society which built itself on Arendt's favorite mode of political organization—small, decentralized revolutionary councils, soviets, "*Räte*," all similar to the kibbutz—would have satisfied her. As the Jews were on the brink of emerging in 1948 from pariah status to full citizenship in the world, the end result should have been, in Arendt's view, a superior incarnation of the democratic heterogeneous state: one within which heterogeneity perserved national identity, distinction and cohesion. Arendt's two hopes for the Jewish future—Palestine and America—could approximate this goal. By 1950, when she wrote the last essay in this new collection, Palestine had turned in a familiar and, for her, unattractive direction. She then switched her attention to America, to its politics and potential as a home for the Jewish nation and Jewish culture. Even in her version of Zionism, both the diaspora in America and the homeland in Palestine required nurturing. Perhaps, after peace comes to the Middle East, when cooperation between Jew and Arab emerges, Arendt's vision, the subject of contempt and ridicule in the 1950s and 1960s, will not appear so fanciful and farfetched.

As a result of *The Jew As Pariah*, it can be seen that Arendt's analysis of the Jewish dilemma provides an interpretive logic for her whole life's work. (Even small points of later theoretical writings, such as the centrality of freedom of movement to the notion of freedom, and the relation of tradition to the creation of legitimate authority, are extensions of her earlier analysis of the character of Jewish lack of political freedom and the historical legacy of Sabbatai Zvi.)

Two additional insights into Arendt's intellectual work are provided by this collection. By comparison with her later writing, all the essays in this collection, heretofore unavailable, are generally better written and more eloquent. The essay, "We Refugees," on what it means to be a refugee and to experience involuntary expulsion is strikingly powerful and moving. Arendt's grasp of the existential dilemma and suicide of Stefan Zweig is gripping, as is her recurring description of the historical significance and moral consequences of survival by Jews in the concentration camps. Her faith in a seminal role for Jews in the future, in the possibility that 1978 would be a better world than 1948, jumps out with powerful rhetorical eloquence on nearly every page.

Second, with the exception of the 1933 *Rahel Varnhagen* biography, these are the only essays of all of Arendt's writings that pursue an individual and social psychological analysis. For philosophic reasons, Arendt later on sought not to take into account the usual range of pseudo-scientific assumptions on the nature and the motivation of human behavior. Her political theory, although historical in narrative, was entirely normative, based on a Kantian-like judgment concerning man, ethics and politics. It confronted the desirable, rarely merely the probable. In these earlier essays she struggled harder to reconcile the 'is' with the 'ought'; the real, the palpable events around her, with her fondest hopes.

Last and most important, these essays should stimulate a long overdue rehabilitation of Hannah Arendt in the Jewish community, where she remains a

"TEN YEARS AGO George Wallace got cheers from blue-collar audiences by promising to throw bureaucrats' briefcases into the Potomac; subsequent conservative attempts to work that vein have unfortunately retained all of his imprecision and none of his vigor. If populism consists in chugging Billy beer and baiting fags, we might as well hang it up. American workers feel the blighting hand of Washington in their schools, in their neighborhoods, and, increasingly, in their jobs; conservatives must present a coherent alternative to liberal statism--or others will."

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source of embarrassment, and the object of resentment and even vicious ridicule. The visible hurt she suffered (as evident in her replies to Gershom Scholem and Walter Laqueur on the Eichmann book, reprinted in this collection) should be rectified, if only for those who care for her memory. Her views on European history and on Zionism, on the nature of Jewish assimilation and the mirage of emancipation were certainly singular and often jarring. She deeply admired Lessing for his assertion of unqualified judgments in the face of an ultimate hesitation regarding absolute truth; and she emulated his habit of "*Selbstdenken*," of thinking for oneself. In her view of the Jews, Arendt was not a follower, not a slogan-monger. Even in the face of open wounds, she asserted what she saw as the truth in order to stimulate virtuous action toward a just world.

These essays demonstrate Hannah Arendt's pride as a Jew. She overstated the imperative that Jews should or could lead the way to a better future for humankind. Yet no matter the circumstances of Jewish survival, she had only contempt for the apologetic Jews, the self-hating Jew, the smug assimilationist, the self-styled Jewish aristocrat, the German Jew hostile to Ostjuden, for the Jew who thought that being Jewish was incidental, for that intellectual who thought fame could transform the Jew into a citizen of the world.

To Hannah Arendt, being Jewish was the decisive fact of her life as a private person and as a political thinker. It cast the mold for the thinking and willing for which she was, and will be, honored. It was therefore most fitting that at her burial, Salo W. Baron, the dean of Jewish historians, whom she was with when she died, alone remembered her in public as a Jew. Ron Feldman, in bringing out this collection, has taken the necessary next step in recapturing, despite the prevailing historical assumptions, an adequate and just sense of Hannah Arendt's commitment, her personal, political, and intellectual development, and the coherence of her thought. Apart from its service to the legacy of Hannah Arendt, *The Jew As Pariah* offers brilliance, eloquence, and reasoned commitment on issues where clarity and courage are in perpetually short supply.

Leon Botstein

Leon Botstein, an historian, is president of Bard College.

Books by Hannah Arendt

The Jew as Pariah
(Grove; $12.50)

Between Past and Future
(Viking; $5.95)

Eichmann in Jerusalem
(Viking; $6)

On Revolution
(Viking; $6)

On Violence
(Harvest/HBJ; $1.65)

Crises of the Republic
(Harvest/HBJ; $2.95)

The Origins of Totalitarianism
(Harvest/HBJ; $4.95)

Men in Dark Times
(Harvest/HBJ; $2.45)

Rahel Varnhagen
(Harvest/HBJ; $3.95)

The Life of the Mind
(HBJ; 2 volumes $25)

The Human Condition
(Univ. of Chicago Press; $5.95)

Books Considered

Finley Peter Dunne & Mr. Dooley: The Chicago Years by Charles Fanning

(University Press of Kentucky: $14.50)

Latter-day interest in Martin Dooley, the once-celebrated tavernkeeper-philosopher of Ar-rchie Road in Chicago, has mostly vanished. Occasionally an historian or a political science textbook writer repeats the oft-quoted maxim of Mr. Dooley to the effect that "th' supreme coort follows th' iliction returns." Otherwise the late Finley Peter Dunne's comic commentator is forgotten.

In the days of McKinley and the first Roosevelt, Dunne's weekly observations in Irish-American parlance were syndicated throughout the Union. Of all that illustrious troupe of journalists who thrived in the great days of Chicago newspaperdom—Eugene Field, George Ade, John T. McCutcheon, Brand Whitlock, Victor Lawson, Theodore Dreiser (briefly), and a little later Ring Lardner, Ben Hecht, Carl Sandburg, Gene Markey, Henry Justin Smith, Vincent Starratt, Burton Rascoe, Francis Hackett—Dunne's contemporary renown was the most widespread. When he left Chicago for New York in 1898, he was received as a celebrity of the first magnitude. For several decades thereafter he mingled with politicos, financial tycoons, socialites, and prominent litterateurs. He was of the Elect of the metropolis.

Charles Fanning's contention, in this interesting and valuable book, is that Dunne's move to Gotham represented the virtual abdication of his career as an important social historian and literary figure, and this despite the fact that the majority of the most famous and oft-quoted Mr. Dooley pieces were written from about 1898 through 1901—following the departure from Chicago. Such pieces, Mr. Fanning contends, were, however popular, little more than astute political journalism, whereas the earlier sketches, grounded as they were in the social, cultural, and economic actualities of working-class Irish life in the Bridgeport area of Chicago, were a genuine contribution to American literature.

Mr. Dooley sketches consisted of observations, in Irish brogue, of one Martin Dooley, with occasional interjections by a boon companion named Hennessy (or, earlier on, one John McKenna). Dunne, who was of middle-class Irish descent himself and not of the laboring class, began with pieces on

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Chicago politics, but soon branched out into economic conditions, Irish patriotic activities, the Church, crime, family life, the Spanish-American War, national politics, imperialism, the diversions of the wealthy and the "short an' simple scandals iv th' poor."

It was—and, in short takes, still is—very funny stuff. Part of the charm lies in interpreting the dialect. It isn't difficult to do, but it is essential—for it slows up the reader's comprehension so that he can savor and enjoy the turns of phrase and the often extravagant punning. I have read attempts to convert the Dooley pieces into standard American-English, and they are flat.

Mr. Dooley on . . .

Blue Collar vs. White Collar Crime

"Niver steal a dure-mat. . . . If ye do, ye'll be invistigated, hanged, an' maybe rayformed. Steal a bank, me boy, steal a bank."

Women's Lib

"Ah," said Mr. Hennessy, the simple democrat. "It wud be all r-right if women'd do their own cookin'."

"Well," said Mr. Dooley. "'Twud be a return to Jacksonyan simplicity, an' 'twud be a gr'reat thing f'r th' resthrant business."

Our Indian Policy

". . . we've started in again to improve th' race; an', if we can get in Gatlin guns enough befure th' winter's snows, we'll tur-rn thim Chippeways into a cimitry branch iv th' Young Men's Christyan Association. We will so."

Public Opinion in America

"Th' enthusyam iv this counthry, Hinnissy, always makes me think iv a bonfire on an ice-floe. It burns bright so long as ye feed it, an' it looks good, but it don't take hold, somehow, on th' ice."

For reasons both good and bad, we don't favor dialect humor any more, but in Mr. Dooley's day it was widely popular. And appropriately so, for what Dunne and the other dialect virtuosi of the time were really writing about was the assimilation of immigrant (or merely rural) populations into modern American society, and the dialect registered the gains, and sometimes the losses, involved therein.

Mr. Fanning, who is concerned solely with the Chicago writings, makes a good case for the argument that Dunne's pieces about life in Chicago constituted the author's heroic effort to interpret and speak up for the poverty-ridden working-class Irish of his day. Dunne's shift to national topics and his departure for New York were the culmination of his growing despair over the plight of the urban poor, and his acknowledgment of the breaking up of Irish-American culture as it was assimilated into general American urban experience—without, just as with other ethnic groups, achieving the spiritual transformation promised by the American democratic ideal. (Though James Gatz of North Dakota was no Irishman, F. Scott Fitzgerald understood what was involved in such a transaction.)

In writing about Mr. Dooley of Ar-rchie Road, Dunne was able to create, though in the restricted form of 750-word newspaper sketches, the kind of human community—"the feeling of the city as a familiar, potentially comfortable, unthreatening place to live"—that characterizes the work of 20th-century Southern writers such as Eudora Welty. So declares Mr. Fanning, and he contends that the Chicago sketches mark a definite accomplishment in American literary realism. Dunne, he says, "should be in everybody's library of realism, for he possessed and acted upon the realist's faith in common life as the stuff of literature." In distancing himself from Ar-rchie Road, Dunne "lost his chance for a full career of literary as well as journalistic greatness."

It is an interesting argument, but it won't finally work, because what it omits is the imaginative—as contrasted with the literal, factual, topical—involvement with form that distinguishes literature from journalism. Unlike those writers such as Clemens, Crane, or even Ring Lardner, who began as newspapermen but moved through journalism into fiction, Dunne never really developed his persona into a fictional character. When he went beyond satire the result was usually sentimentality. One would have to say that Martin Dooley, Hennessy, Father Kelly, Hogan, and the other denizens of Ar-rchie Road never become much more than mouthpieces for Dunne. He lacked the artistic compulsion that drove Mark Twain from writing humorous sketches into genuine involvement with his characters.

The Chicago sketches have an incipient literary interest. They may have helped to open the way for the literary use of the American city. But they are not, in any absolute sense, literature, for they do not create their milieu: they only describe it. Mr. Fanning has succeeded admirably in showing us the value of the Mr. Dooley sketches as social history. But no imaginative meaning ever emerges from the conversations in Ar-rchie Road. In Mr. Dooley's own words, "th' truth is a tough boss in lithrachoor. He don't pay aven boord wages, an' if ye go to wurruk f'r him ye want to have a job on th' side."

Louis D. Rubin, Jr.

Louis D. Rubin, Jr.'s most recent book is *The Wary Fugitives: Four Poets and the South* (Louisiana State University Press).

Memoirs by Jean Monnet

(Doubleday; $12.95)

In March 1958, as the Common Market was being established, Jean Monnet wrote to the premier of France and suggested the creation of a European money market with joint reserves and convertible currencies. Twenty years later, at the Bremen summit in July 1978, the nine members of the European Economic Community took their first serious and practical steps towards establishing precisely that kind of European monetary system. This decision, largely prompted by the slide of the American dollar, brings to life one of the homilies that dot the pages of Jean Monnet's *Memoirs:* "There are no premature ideas; there are only opportunities for which one must learn to wait."

Patience and determination,

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sometimes mistaken for optimism, helped make Monnet's career unique. The heir to a family brandy business in Cognac, he became a European and Atlantic statesman over a 60-year span that included two wars and two reconstructions, yet he never held elective office and only occasionally appointive jobs.

Monnet is best known in this country as the father of post-World War II European unification, the instigator and first president of the Coal and Steel Community and a guiding force behind the Common Market. From the Roosevelt through the Kennedy administrations he had access to the top ranks of American officialdom which shared his enthusiasm for European unification. He managed all this without a real political base other than the appeal of his ideas to a war-weary Europe and his ability to press European leaders to act upon them.

His memoirs describe the evolution of his ideas and the institutions that grew out of them. This is above all the saga of an anti-nationalist, one of that small breed of men whose political ideas were forged in reaction to the cataclysm of World War I. Their goal was to create institutions that would prevent the world and especially Europe from resorting again to nationalistic wars. The League of Nations was the most conspicuous example of their failure; the Marshall Plan, the European Coal and Steel Community and the Common Market the most conspicuous examples of their success. Monnet was intimately involved in founding or helping run all these institutions. The measure of their success or failure, in his mind, depended on the willingness of member nations to delegate some national sovereignty to a common or federal authority that transcended a mere committee or alliance. His faith in the institutional and collective approach to political problems remains undiminished, and he concludes his memoirs with the assertion that the European Community "is only a stage on the way to the organized world of tomorrow." It is an unusual message in an era heavy with institutional disillusionment.

But then by almost every standard, Monnet is an unusual man. He could gain access to important people—from French premiers in World War I to Roosevelt and Churchill in World War II and to the postwar leaders of Europe and America—because they knew that he was not seeking to promote himself but to push for whatever great cause was foremost—aircraft for the wartime allies or programs for postwar European unity.

Like most men associated with the great events of this century, whether as participants or observers, Monnet has less enthusiasm for recent leaders than for his personal heroes—FDR, Churchill, Harry Hopkins, Eisenhower and Kennedy. Of Harold Wilson, for example, he remarks, "I had confidence in his skills and in nothing else." He brushes aside former West German Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger with the observation, "He had more charm than strength." And he mentions Richard Nixon twice and Henry Kissinger only once, a measure of the drift of American interests away from Europe since the early 1960s.

These rare barbs aside, this is a memoir without rancor, full of understatement and based on the assurance that the right ideas will ultimately triumph. This emerges most clearly in Monnet's recollections of his relationship with Charles de Gaulle. Through the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, de Gaulle and Monnet spoke for two diametrically opposing views on the future of Western Europe—Monnet's federalism and de Gaulle's nationalism or a Europe of states. Despite their divergent personalities and philosophies, there was a measure of grudging respect on both sides. Their conflicts were not so much gladiatorial as reminiscent of two wary and circling cats trying to avoid an open fight. The complexity and ambiguity of the relationship seeps through the pages of this memoir and is best reflected by Monnet's assessment of de Gaulle's character as a "mixture of practical intelligence that could only command respect and a disquieting tendency to overstep the bounds of common sense."

Part of the ambiguity rested in the constantly unequal nature of the relationship, beginning in the wartime exile in London when Monnet continued to work as an Allied purchasing agent rather than throw in his lot immediately with de Gaulle's Free French. Yet, as something of a middleman among the Allies and contending factions of the Free French, Monnet emerged with few enough scars from the political conspiracies of Algiers to be named by de Gaulle as director of the national economic recovery plan in the postwar government.

Monnet reached the peak of his influence in the years de Gaulle was out of power, as the first president of the

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Coal and Steel Community, promoter of the unsuccessful European Defense Community and one of the founders of the Common Market. As head of the Action Committee for a United States of Europe, a grouping of Europe's most influential politicians and citizens, Monnet appeared to be leading the vanguard to a unified Europe.

The balance tilted the other way after 1958 and de Gaulle's return to power. Monnet's committee and most of the politicians of Europe were no match against the French state. Monnet and his fellow Europeans were reduced to fighting rearguard actions against de Gaulle's efforts to limit or weaken the Community.

Yet, even Monnet's epitaph for the General comes in various shades of gray: "If he had failed to build the Europe that he sought, he had at least not managed to prevent the development of a Europe in which he did not believe."

For Monnet, the direction of Europe remains clear, even as some of the early gains turn sour with recession, inflation, unemployment, a threatened return to protectionism and political instability partly induced by a revival of regional and linguistic nationalism bred by remote centralized governments.

Monnet likes to compare Europe's journey with that of the raft Kon Tiki and says, "We, too, are heading for our objective, the United States of Europe; and for us there is no going back." That observation could be dangerously modest: this memoir amply and repeatedly demonstrates that it takes determined, patient and skillful people not only to place great enterprises on courses but to keep them there.

Michael D. Mosettig

Michael D. Mosettig is an NBC News field producer and former Common Market correspondent for UPI.

The Teamsters
by Steven Brill

(Simon and Schuster; $11.95)

The Hoffa Wars
by Dan E. Moldea

(Paddington Press; $10.95)

"The story of the Teamsters union will . . . continue to be one of some good deeds, and some bad deeds . . . with a sad bottom line that it could have been much better," writes Steven Brill at the conclusion of *The Teamsters*. Unfortunately, the same assessment applies to his book.

Brill has at least made an effort—unusual in labor reporting—to include some material on how unions look to the rank and file. By following an apparently conscientious local union president through a day of visiting workplaces and handling grievances, he shows members' typical concerns: getting medical bills paid, protesting inhuman work schedules, bargaining for health and safety protection. Spending a shift with a truck driver, Brill is able to give a first-hand account of the noise, vibration, and risk of accident drivers face. He frequently describes ways in which corruption at the top results in lower economic benefits or deprivation of contract rights for Teamster members.

Still, Brill ignores the ultimate question—how can something be *done* about Teamster corruption? He devotes 30 pages to FBI background memos on the Hoffa murder case—memos which add only slight corroboration to the familiar allegations that Teamster President Frank Fitzsimmons and Mafia figures were involved in Hoffa's disappearance. He spends 60 pages detailing corrupt financial deals at the Central States Pension Fund, another widely reported subject which could have been summarized in a much shorter space, and 47 pages on a profile of Harold Gibbons, a former Hoffa aide whose story, contrary to Brill's assertions, is not at all central to understanding Teamster corruption or the prospects for Teamster reform. Yet he only gives four pages to PROD, the rank and file organization fighting for Teamster reform, and only five sentences to the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, another fast-growing reform group. In his brief account of PROD, Brill makes no mention of major changes undertaken by the organization more than a year before the book was published in which a new staff was hired and a new grassroots strategy adopted. He captures the Teamster members' attitude toward reform in a quote from a trucker to whom, ironically, Brill was referred by the Teamster brass:

> *Actually, I went to a PROD meeting over at Kent State last summer to see what was going on. And, I'll tell you, I was impressed. I think PROD's doing a lot of really good stuff. . . . I'll bet you not more than 30 percent of the members really support Fitzsimmons and the other bosses in the union. The other 70 percent all have mixed emotions like I do. But there's not much we're ready to do about it, because it wouldn't matter and it might mean no work.*

But Brill fails to explore this contradiction between the desire for reform and the fear of sticking one's neck out. Is there any way that PROD and TDU can break through that fear? What lessons can be learned from reform movements in other unions? Is there any prospect that reformers can raise enough money to compete with the incumbents? Will government "crackdowns" really bring changes, or only lull Teamster members into hoping someone else will solve their problems? In short, is Teamster reform possible, and, if so, how could it come about?

Within the book's format of nine profiles of key individuals, Brill misses his chance to discuss reform prospects by choosing as his typical rebel an aging warehouseman whose gripe is highly personal: he claims five more years of seniority than the company or union give him credit for. There is no description of an activist, someone who organizes protest meetings or demonstrations, who seeks institutional change as well as individual justice.

Brill's account also suffers from an unfortunate tendency to seek journalistic "balance" even when none is justified: he contradicts himself in his effort to include some praise for the "bad guys." Early in the book, he gives Fitzsimmons credit for setting up the union's occupational safety and health department; at two later points, he states flatly that the department was created only because of pressure from PROD. He praises Fitzsimmons for winning larger wage increases in Teamster contracts than Hoffa did,

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glossing over the fact that rank and file organizing during the 1976 contract negotiations forced the leadership to push for a better settlement. He repeats the myth that Teamster power enriches union members as well as union leaders, ignoring the obvious point that many drivers have high incomes only because union officials allow the companies to require work weeks of 60 hours.

For all its faults, *The Teamsters* is at least more readable than Dan Moldea's *The Hoffa Wars*. Moldea tells us far more than we would ever want to know about many aspects of the Teamsters' past, including the possible involvement of union and Mafia leaders in assassination plots against Fidel Castro and John Kennedy. Too often, Moldea seems to practice a style of investigative reporting in which the relentless listing of facts is far more important than organization and analysis. Some people like to discuss conspiracies for recreation, the way others follow the careers of sports heroes or movie stars. But for most of us, there is already more than enough proof that many institutions are not serving the public interest. We know that many of the commonly discussed conspiracies *could* have taken place. A valuable book would summarize the evidence of corruption, and then go on to discuss in practical terms what can be done to bring these institutions under control. Sadly, neither Brill nor Moldea has written such a book.

Matt Witt

Matt Witt is former editor of the *United Mine Workers Journal.*

A Manual for Manuel
by Julio Cortázar
translated by Gregory Rabassa

(Pantheon; $10.95)

A devoted experimentalist, Julio Cortázar has given us novels that skip back and forth between chapters (*Hopscotch*, 1966); that can be assembled by the reader (*62: A Model Kit*, 1972); and now in *A Manual for Manuel* a novel that merges story and history, a supposed scrapbook of newsclippings, journal entries, diagrams, transcripts of conversations, and much more. Yet for all his formal innovations, Cortázar has only one plot. In *A Manual for Manuel* we meet once again a disaffected Argentinian intellectual searching for meaning on the streets and in the ateliers of Bohemian Paris. And again we follow the exile's progress from detachment to commitment, from isolation to affiliation.

Unlike Cortázar's earlier seeker-heroes, Andrés Fava of *A Manuel for Manuel* is searching for something quite specific: a political cause. For a man whose tastes are both elitist and eclectic—his passions are for Stockhausen and avant-garde jazz, Rimbaud and Andy Warhol—this is a tall order. Yet Andrés is obsessed by a dream in which an unknown Cuban calls him out of a crowded theater, "I approach the man waiting for me, and what comes next is the moment. . . . *after having spoken to the Cuban* . . . . When I go out I'm a man who has a mission to fulfill, but while I know that and most of all feel it, I also know that I haven't got the slightest idea of what the mission is. . . ." The novel chronicles his search for that mission.

Andrés flirts with the idea of joining a band of Latin-American revolutionaries-in-exile, the Screwery, that is plotting to kidnap a Latin-American V.I.P. Andrés attends many of their consciousness-raising sessions—most of them given over to discussing new articles the group is collecting in a scrapbook for Manuel, the young child of two Screwery members—but just can't get himself to take their cause seriously. It is only when his girlfriend leaves him for a more committed member of the group that Andrés decides to take a stand. He bursts into the Screwery's hideaway to declare his commitment—just as the police are closing in. With the Screwery's own plot collapsing in a brutal shootout, Andrés takes over as protector of the group's vital documents. He has found his cause: he will assemble their notes, journals, clippings, diagrams, and transcripts and serve them up as *A Manual for Manuel.*

Despite—or because of—the tortuous plot, this novel is one of Cortázar's least structurally complex. He confines most of his experiments with form—abrupt shifts in scene and narrator, unexplained appearances of unidentified characters—to the first third of the novel and settles into something close to a standard thriller as the kidnapping plot gets under way. The scrapbook format, really a montage of conversations and internal monologues by Screwery members interspersed with an occasional newsclip or diagram, conveniently reduces to an alternation of plot lines no more innovative than a 19th-century novel.

Cortázar's experiments in *A Manual for Manuel* are more subtle than in his previous works. He invents what might be called the brick wall method of characterization: in the first pages of the novel, the reader is instructed to imagine a movie theater in which a brick wall takes the place of the screen. The Screwery members file in, take their seats, and in their response to this classically absurd situation give us all we will ever really know of their personalities:

> *Poets like Lonstein . . . talk about the millenary kingdom, Patricio . . . laugh[s] in its face, Susana . . . think[s] vaguely about a happiness that doesn't have to be bought with injustice and tears, Ludmilla . . . remember[s], without knowing why, a little white dog that she would have liked to have when she was ten. . . .*

Cortázar's method is to reduce each character to a particular set of obsessions and verbal mannerisms, and it is only by these that we can differentiate them. In this way, *A Manual for Manuel* becomes more than anything a book about styles of communication. Cortázar turns his imagination loose in generating a variety of forms of what he calls "speech defined by life"—enough to identify Andrés and all the members of the Screwery. Lonstein, a solipsist whose loves and friendships have gone sour so often that he proselytizes for an advanced science of masturbation, speaks a language full of neologisms, acronyms, and allusions that makes him all but unintelligible. Oscar, a recent arrival in Paris for whom "everything was Argentina," carries on internal dialogues—his deepest thoughts of Argentina printed in tiny type above the

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lines that speak his more conscious thoughts.

Although much of this is gimmicky, Cortázar's verbal antics sometimes pay off. One of the most moving passages in the novel reports the conversation of two Screwery couples as they fall asleep after an evening of revolutionary discussion. Their fragmented conversation, full of nonsense and significance, reveals a lot about each of these characters. Thoughts that would never have emerged during the day—true feelings about the day's events, old jealousies, and a good deal of tenderness—all surface in this moment "when fatigue turns its creatures loose and proposes answers to enigmas."

More often, though, the brick wall method inhibits feeling. Concerned with devising speech to identify a variety of characters, Cortázar ends up instead with a collection of hollow types. *A Manual's* characters have a limited range of emotions and express those they do have mechanically. When lovers break up it is "through an accumulation of behavior patterns that can't be reconciled"; rather than share their feelings and work out a plan for change, the couple instead hopes "for a kind of mutation in the way we loved." Love scenes read like excerpts from hip sex manuals or a porn magazines's play-by-play account. Add to this Lonstein's impersonal disquisitions on the merits of masturbation, and the result is a language of clinical diagnosis masquerading as passion.

Cortázar is no better at inventing a convincing radical-speak for his band of revolutionaries. The Screwery is made up largely of the sort of bourgeois radicals, living off "fellowships or papa's money," better left behind with the 1960s—we recognize them by their rhetoric. If Cortázar's translator were not Gregory Rabassa, whose skills brought *One Hundred Years of Solitude* to the English-speaking world, it might be possible to excuse this as poor translation. Cortázar will have enough trouble interesting today's readers in questions such as whether reality exists or how to make revolution without this almost lethal dose of the Screwery's self-righteous jargon and sophomoric humor. The reader quickly feels as if he's been trapped in a college dorm late at night in 1968. Obviously there was more to 1960s radicalism than stale rhetoric, but it is that feature that Cortázar, intentionally or not, has captured most successfully.

Written back in 1969-72, *A Manual for Manuel* suffers from time lag, not just because audiences have turned apathetic during the years it took to translate and publish this American edition, but because readers who might have been receptive to Cortázar's political message have had a chance to sort out good politics from bad. The Screwery's politics are in many cases appalling: its female members are lumped together as "mad maenads" who keep house while their men make revolution. Our heroine is an earth-mother type who cannot think straight, responding to any complex situation with an ambiguous monosyllable, "bloop." Before long, the Screwery, with its holier-than-thou attitude, power-mongering, and sadistic sex, reveals itself as little better than the governments it opposes.

It's hard to know what to make of *A Manual for Manuel.* Cortázar covers himself from most of the above charges with a heavy dose of irony—no character or event is played straight. It almost seems that Cortázar intended to ridicule esthetes like Andrés and radical groups like the Screwery, but he has so often stressed his serious intentions that this seems unlikely. As he said in a recent interview, "I wrote [*A Manuel*] in an attempt to alert readers to the political tortures and persecutions practiced in Argentina by the government of General Lanusse." This concern, however, surfaces mainly in the reprints of newspaper reports of political torture and insurgency that make up the only non-ironic writing in the book.

Cortázar was facing an enormous challenge, not unlike Andrés's, when he began this book: could a writer whose reputation was made on novels that glorified the esthetic, uncommitted life, write a novel that argued for political commitment? The scrapbook format, in the end, provided a neat way to inject political concern without having to take a stand. Yet this leaves the reader adrift. What exactly is Cortazar proposing?

A Manual for Manuel is ultimately a disturbing book, for reasons quite different from those Cortazar intended. He knows the power of language, yet ironically it is not his own passages that, in his phrase, "bite with the teeth of words," but the long testimonies of torture he has reprinted that leave the reader shaken and moved to action. What is so upsetting about this novel is the disparity between the world of the newsclippings and the ironic, hedonistic, and morally corrupt Paris of the Screwery. Cortázar is not mistaken in injecting political theory and historical incident into his work—a charge he spent many pages defending himself against in *A Manual.* Instead he fails by evading the challenge to integrate the life of the esthete that he has so gloriously depicted in previous works with the politically concerned life one can only imagine he advocates.

Megan Marshall

Megan Marshall is a freelance writer and editor.

Brief Reviews

Current Fiction

Blindness
by Henry Green

(Viking; $8.95)

John Haye, the hero of Green's reissued first novel, is a 17-year-old who attends an English facsimile of Eton and goes in for art and diary-writing that echoes the self-love of a Me Generation (circa 1920). With his callowness there is an unexpected, untried capacity for facing up to the most harrowing facts. One day, as he sits in a train, a small boy's stone shatters a window and blinds him. He settles down to an inert life on the family estate, disbelieving at first that he is permanently scarred, that his eyes have been removed, that he will have to contend with the pity and misunderstanding of his stepmother, his nanny, his servants. He unconsciously mimics old age and turns over mental pictures of past scenes that had pleased him. Then he tries a flight in the opposite direction, throwing off the notion that the future is a threat to him, training his ear to pick up the most delicate nuances of sound, and thereby increasing his freedom of movement as well as discovering a new world of sensuous pleasures.

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Blindness is fact and symbol in Green's shrewdly patterned novel. John's stepmother is blinded by the vanities of money and social position and alarmed that John might forget centuries of family history and marry Joan Entwhistle. Joan and her father (who would be Huckleberry Finn's Pap were it not for a distinctly superior education) live on a strip of woodland near the Haye estate and are never more than 24 hours from starvation. The Entwhistles are conceived with just enough warmth to suggest that they are holidaying from a gloomier naturalistic novel Green *might* have written. The father, a minister who was given the boot, scarred the girl in a moment of alcoholic fury. Yet she drudges for him and tries to believe in the genius he will release when he writes his grand this-will-redeem-me book. Green's chapter on their relationship, "Picture Postcardism," is a bit too indulgent, but it displays the young novelist's tolerance and argues against one critic's contention that a moral rigor in Green turned his story into a bloodless version of *Crime and Punishment*.

The impact of another man's sufferings caused the Wedding Guest of Coleridge's poem to become in one night "a sadder and wiser man." John Haye, tutored by his sufferings, grows more cheerful and finds life the more precious as its boundaries become narrower. Green didn't know the anguish of blindness as Kipling, who lost his sight temporarily after a nervous breakdown, knew it. Yet *Blindness* is a better and wiser novel than *The Light That Failed*, Kipling's story of artist-adventurer Dick Heldar whose loss of sight robbed him of his occupation and sent him to his deliberate death on an Egyptian battlefield. Heldar's end is at best a child's-eye view of unselfish heroism.

Blindness was originally published in 1926, when Green was 21, and it is fingermarked with influences. We see the shade of Dostoievsky in the deeply moving passage describing John's terror and ecstasy before an epileptic seizure. Oscar Wilde and Hans Andersen of the fairy tales probably influenced the charming, sometimes embarrassingly tender descriptions of woodland and of bird and animal life. The hand of Katherine Mansfield may be recognized in the interior monologues. Green made no technical experiments of his own in *Blindness*; hence its isolated place among the nine novels he published. But a first novel is by any sensible definition an experiment; Green's subject was a bold one, and his success was all the more extraordinary because he chose to write here of things he knew mainly by instinct.

James Walt

James Walt is a frequent reviewer of French and Anglo-American fiction.

Fields of Fire
by James Webb

(Prentice-Hall; $9.95)

In her National Book Award winning *Winners and Losers*, Gloria Emerson angrily recalls a 1974 book review by a *New York Times* critic that began: "Quick—before your mind fogs up at the prospect of yet another report on Vietnam . . ." Now the proliferating genre numbers no fewer than 30 novels and tens of nonfiction memoirs and post-mortems. Although *Fields of Fire* does not rank with either Michael Herr's already classic *Dispatches* or Tim O'Brien's widely acclaimed *Going After Cacciato* as an enduring work of art, ex-Marine James Webb has fashioned a searing vision of that tragic and futile war.

Like all good war novels, *Fields of Fire* pulsates with the horror, comraderie and yes, the joy of men at war. Webb's driving narrative draws you right into the poncho hootches and marine trenches that ring the village of An Hoa. His prose is often awkward ("Bagger shook his head miserably," "the first Sergeant sat among a gaggle of clerks") and verbose, but it is enhanced by authentic dialogue and the inimitable patois of jungle combat: Baby Cakes and Cat Man are Number One soldiers (the very best); when the enemy launches artillery shells, it's time to retreat ricky-tick (immediately, if not sooner); and when Lieutenant Hodges says, "I think we've all gone *dinky dau*," he expresses a universal truth that needs no translation.

The novel is essentially plotless, relying instead on bittersweet vignettes like this one that shows Webb at his descriptive best:

Phony waved to Bagger: "What's happening, Bag Man? He waved again, to Hodges. "Well, hey, Lieutenant. You see my gooks?"

Hodges squinted. "Your gooks?"

"Yeah. The ones in the crater. I done 'em. Boom-boom."

Cannonball pointed toward the crater. "Yeah, Lieutenant. You should have seen it. Snake, he figured it, but old Phony done it. Ain't nobody can chuck a frag like Phony."

Phony smiled, chewing a wad of C-ration gum. "Boom-boom."

Cannonball nodded, grinnning. "Boom-boom."

What a memorable group of grunts! Hodges, the platoon commander who grew up haunted by his ancestral Ghosts of Greenspring, Shiloh, Pickett's Charge and the Battle of the Bulge. (If there had been no Nam, Hodges muses, he would have had to invent one.) Snake, "bad old Snake," who swabbed bathroom floors, when he could find a job. Phony, who lived in a dozen foster homes before graduating to "Juvie Hall" and a desultory street life. A whole battalion of tough dudes who found glory and honor on the fields of fire.

Thematically, Webb's key character is Will Goodrich, a Harvard student who enlists in the Marine Band but is mistakenly assigned to the front lines. Senator—as he is called—is his fellow grunts' foil, the timid soldier, the moralist. Not until after he re-enrolls at Harvard—predictably, Senator is the one who survives most intact—does he find the courage and soldier honor that eluded him on the battlefield. Confronted by war protesters on a football rally field, Goodrich lashes out at the students who could never understand, the ones who had not *been there*. "'I SAW DUDES, MAN. DUDES. AND TRUCK DRIVERS AND COAL MINERS AND FARMERS. I DIDN'T SEE YOU. WHERE WERE YOU? FLUNKING YOUR DRAFT PHYSICALS? WHAT DO YOU CARE IF IT ENDS? YOU WON'T GET HURT.'" Webb's contempt is obvious, but Goodrich is too stylized and the climactic scene too contrived to be totally convincing.

Still, *Fields of Fire* deserves to be read, not as "the most powerful war novel in a generation" (as its publishers would have you believe), but as a vivid reminder of what it was like to live through the war most everyone would now like to forget.

Raphael Sagalyn

Raphael Sagalyn is a contributing editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*.

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Rumours of Rain
by André Brink

(William Morrow; $10.95)

Set against the background of the South African drought and culminating in a torrent of rain, *Rumours of Rain* depicts a parched human landscape of stealthy, eruptive thirsts. André Brink has taken a large, ideologically-charged premise and proceeds to render it in intimate terms without—and this might well be unique among such efforts—sacrificing any of its hard-edged, "political" implications. Brink writes about slim, barricaded identities: whites against blacks, men against women, sons against fathers, and the way in which distorted private histories affect the public arena. His book is strong, even stony, as befits its perception of a land and a people who have been forced to a belated and violent reckoning with history.

". . . [I]n the tropics the indifference is more prominent," wrote E. M. Forster of India, "the inarticulate world is closer at hand and readier to resume control as soon as men are tired." *Rumours of Rain* opens with, and obsessively returns to, an image of vigilant, imminent natural forces: "Gnats. A whole swarm of gnats plastered on the windscreen and the wipers out of order." The car belongs to Martin Myndhardt, the novel's complexly repellent narrator who, from the haven of a luxurious London hotel room, tries to make sense of a weekend in his recent past, on the eve of the Soweto riots, when everything ceased to make sense. Martin, an exponent of apartheid on both the literal-political and the metaphorical-human levels, is a business magnate who has deleted the embryonic idealism and lyricism that were aspects of his youthful personality—now mockingly dubbed his "Early Romantic Period"—in the service of a Machiavellian outlook that has netted him wealth and position. "People are essentially economic propositions. The way I see it, if I meet somebody he tries to sell himself to me; and whether I decide to buy him or not, is determined by his efficacy as a salesman." He uses the same self-justifying logic to propound an economics based on massive racial discrimination and exploitation: "The day you deny a man the chance of being rewarded for his effort, you can dig a grave for our civilization. That's all there is to it." It is Martin himself who, in an off-guarded moment, penetrates the official camouflage of his statements and leads us up to the ruthless truth of his life: "But in my sort of work there isn't any room for sentiment. Kill or be killed, and if one is forced, from time to time, to step over corpses, well, then it is simply part of the game."

Through a series of ruminations and in-depth flashbacks, Martin recounts four days centering around a trip to arrange the sale of his old family farm; in heeding the siren-call of financial profit he has to all but evict his fiercely proud mother who has continued to work the arid Ciskei terrain and to administer to her black laborers. He is accompanied by his withdrawn 19-year-old son, Louis, who has returned from combat in Angola marked by the profound apathy of an unwilling survivor. Martin is chagrined to find Louis struggling with the very inhumanity that he has accepted and expertly maneuvered within for his own gains. We also learn of Bernard, Martin's closest friend since his university days, a brilliant, idealistic lawyer who gradually becomes involved in anti-apartheid "terrorist" activities and has just been sentenced to prison in an impassioned courtroom trial, partly due to Martin's refusal to assist him. And finally there is Bea, Martin's reluctant mistress, vulnerable where he is inaccessible, strong where he is weak, offering him the possibility of redemption through her own capacities for empathy, before she too is caught up in the gathering political storm.

Rumours of Rain is an ambitious, resonant novel that depicts a volatile situation with remarkable control and lack of sentimentality. It has, understandably, been compared to *Cry, the Beloved Country*, although Brink generally resists the poetic—that sonorous influence which made Alan Paton's novel a beautiful and timeless one, and the absence of which makes *Rumours of Rain* less "literary" and more urgent.

Daphne Merkin

Daphne Merkin is a New York writer.

Reconsideration

An Ordinary Bloke

Henry Miller is 87 years old and with his stimulating intoxication in his own existence has tried to put every one of those years on paper. Though I read him with the same pleasure I get from food and drink, I have the distinct impression that Miller is not interested in *writing* so much as he in proving to himself that Henry Miller really exists.

For me Miller is an ordinary bloke with the catch-as-catch-can hold on life that is the fate of ordinary blokes in the crazy universe of the big city. The great writer that Miller is not often has a worse time of it, but always tries to transcend himself; he believes, as Henry James put it, that "art *makes* life." Miller thinks that one experience is as important as any other and that the duplication of the same sex organs makes each new woman an important encounter.

Miller is known as a sex devil to some easily (and professionally) outraged feminists. His wistfully literal descriptions of intercourse have persuaded Lawrence Durrell, Karl Shapiro, and Barney Rosset of the Grove Press that he is a one-man freedom force. But Miller's essentially passive and dream-like attitude toward life—the ordinary bloke understandably believes in nothing so much as the hold "*they*" have on "me"—is more significant than his (by now commonplace) descriptions of protracted genital heat. Miller's attempt to sound casual, emotionally indifferent and even perverse (that Paris whore made me retch but the grittiness of everything must be respected!) is actually at variance with his noticeable sweetness and the bookish idealism that he has retained from the Brooklyn Public Library. There is a moony vagueness even to his considerable rhetoric, a persistent outcry of what-is-life-all-about and a poignant hope that

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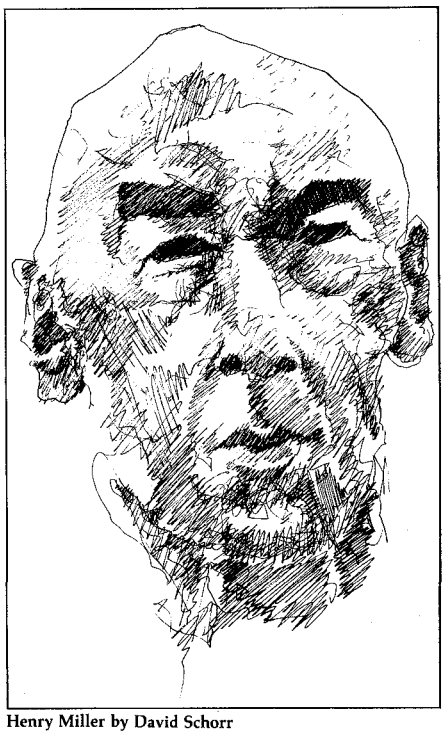


Henry Miller by David Schorr

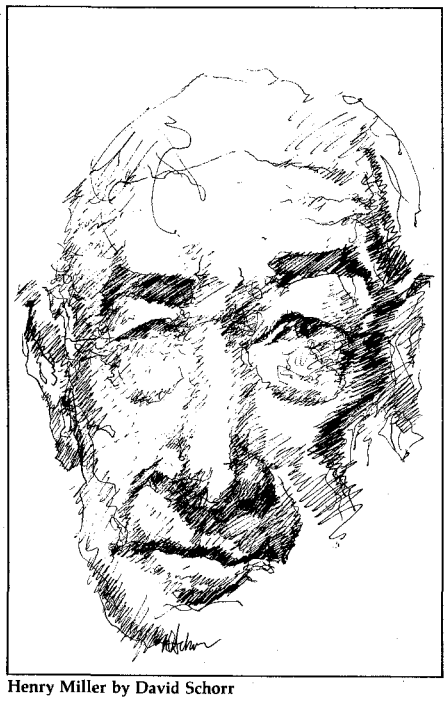
his own long drifting may be swallowed up in some universal cataclysm, that is as familiar as a taxidriver's grousing. "I want the whole world to be out of whack," he wrote in *Tropic of Cancer*. Look, it is!

This man has undoubtedly been through hell. The mass of men now lead lives of *noisy* desperation. Miller is their prophet. But is "hell" the desperately broke, even panhandling existence he led in New York and Paris until Grove Press defied an authority worried more about government secrets than the bedroom and made Miller a best-seller? Is "hell" his string of convulsive but regularly doomed marriages and affairs, each woman at first such a perfect motherly breast that disillusion is guaranteed? "Hell," as Jay Martin shows in his biographical attempt to catch up with Miller's many lives, *Always Merry And Bright* (Capra Press; $15.95), is ordinary beyond belief. It is the feeling that nothing works and is not meant to. Nothing is safe. Everything hangs by a thread. Life is just deceit. Nobody has any reason to know who he really is and where we are.

Miller has had the most restless life, the most "picturesque" life. But it is as hard for his biographer to create a single character out of Miller's welter of experiences as it has been for Miller himself. Miller is in life, as in his books, the most accessible of men. But since the commonplace, in our time, is to believe that our life is always in other hands, it is obvious why Miller writes like a man virtually drowned by too many experiences.

Tropic of Cancer was written "desperately"—to make himself believe that he was alive. Much of his writing is not an effort to "shock" but to stave off his gnawing sense of obliteration. "This morning . . . as I took the first mouthful of food the thought came to me, 'Whatever happens, death will come, sooner or later.' I pushed aside my plate and feverishly, madly, started to make some notes about my life which will be of use to my biographers. Just the names of places and people and influences—a sort of synoptic history of my life. I have got so little of the truth on paper as yet. It makes me wild with impatience. . . . And do you know what? Here and there I'm deliberately putting down a lie—just to throw the bastards off the track, like." In 24 hours he compiled notes for a complete cycle of autobiographical novels.

Everything Miller says about his writing shows this same urgency to "get it down," to get it out of himself rather than to create works of art that can stand and speak for themselves. It is as hard to tell many of his books from each other as it is to tell Miller's "imaginary" life from his real one. There is just a stream of Milleriana, the same voice going on and on about himself. Of course his books are "strong"; his *feelings* are. Individual sentences can be as clamorous as a lovers' quarrel. But he writes not to create books but to escape from life onto paper. So there is no continued story, just episodes. The plot is too familiar to turn into a separate story. As with his unbelievable subjection to his second wife, June, whom he



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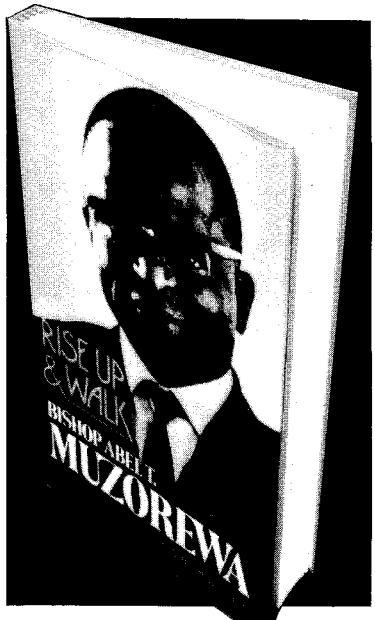

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met in Wilson's dance hall on Broadway in 1923 and who magnetized, tormented, betrayed, tantalized him exactly because he expected life to come at him that way, Miller is the average man in his total fatalism.

"I had a thousand faces, all of them genuine." There are 58 chapters to Martin's biography, five wives, innumerable women—not the least of whom was Anais Nin, that determined narcissist who knew what *she* was doing. She would typically arouse Miller with "Come and be my husband for a few days." From the old 14th ward in Brooklyn to the seedy Paris of the 1930s; from the dance halls, subway latrines, the Western Union office where he once unbelievably served as employment manager to the comically plush mansion-with-pillars in Pacific Palisades where I once saw his swimming pool as full of damsels as an old MGM musical, Miller has had more people in his life, has written more words, has been up and down more times, has been handled and mishandled by more women, than even this over-full biography can convey. The succession of friends, books, loves, breakups, of borrowed houses and temporary people to whom Miller seems to have *lent* himself (with the same wistful Brooklyn street boy enthusiasm and friendliness) is like a parody of some 19th-century Great Life—Dickens, Tolstoy, Mark Twain. Where they had inclusiveness, Miller has had separation; where they had authority, Miller has been the literary tramp; where they struggled to define the modern crisis of society, economics, belief, Miller has put his country down as "the air-conditioned nightmare."

In 1940, the year the world took a decisive turn (and the year Henry Miller safely returned to America), George Orwell described Miller as an anticipation of literature under totalitarianism, "inside the whale." Miller signified to Orwell not extreme individualism but submission; not an excess of temperament and personality, but a remarkable willingness to be led intellectually by the nose. You can see how right Orwell was each time Miller magnifies each new person in turn and in *The Colossus of Maroussi* romanticizes Greece on the brink of war.

This fond illusion that any experience is as valuable as any other experience no longer excites. The current "life-styles" are already so private, so Milleresque, that without the culture of repression that made Miller (born 1891) a temporary symbol of emancipation, Miller's exclamatory style no longer offers much liberation to the self. His curse on our world fits in all too well with our political pessimism and the glib assurances of "global nuclear destruction."

Still, Miller remains in the best sense of the world an amateur, a *lover* of letters. If his philosophy is that of a much bedraggled and exploited clerk with too many problems and an understandable feeling that not he but the *world* should go to hell, there is something touching about the man and his long long struggle *not* to go under this time. Miller's life and work seem so exchangeable that it is hard to believe that his books will last. But what does last is the trouble he's seen—and the great writer who will not be stymied by it.

Alfred Kazin

Alfred Kazin's most recent book is *New York Jew* (Knopf).

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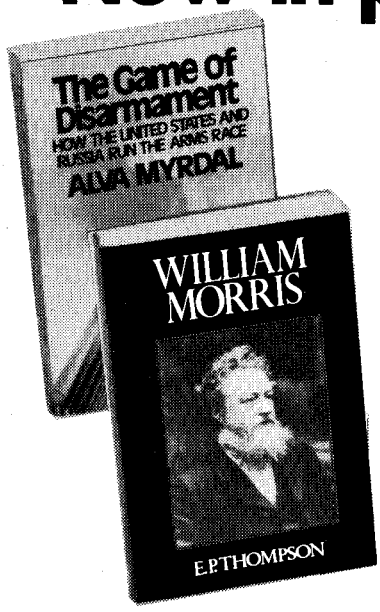

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Correspondence

Evangelical phobia

To the editors:

One should not need, in this era of American decline and collapse of the dollar, a short course in that evangelical phobia which has so often darkened American history—the "ugly American" *mania to reform the world in our image. The New Republic,* in the September 30 article by Charles Fenyvesi, has given us a refresher course.

Perhaps I am naive; I read the article three times to be sure it wasn't an attempt, no matter how "hammy," at leg-pulling. Could he be serious? The concluding two lines are a new peak of that arrogance which has made others so wary—"give heart to people who believe that America's business in the world is to help save it. And if the world has to be saved, is there anyone else who could do a better job?" My God, here we go again!

A quotation comes to mind (Professor Manning of Stanford): ". . . there are the special dangers that crusades always bring. Once launched, *the jihad, the holy war,* is the lease manageable of all forms of human dispute. For man's greatest suffering at the hands of man we can thank the ideologues and the religious zealots of history. . . ."

Virgil C. Sullivan
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Credit where credit is due

To the editors:

Carl Sagan's essay, *"The Other World That Beckons: Albert Einstein, 1879-1955" (TNR,* Sept. 16) quotes generously from Einstein's *Autobiographical Notes* without identifying the source.

The *Notes* were first published by Open Court in *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist,* edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp, as one volume of his series, "The Library of Living Philosophers." They were reprinted some years ago in a Harper Torchbook (now out of print).

Your readers may be interested to know that the *Notes* will be reissued by Open Court in a centennial edition early next year.

Howard R. Webber
Vice President & General Manager
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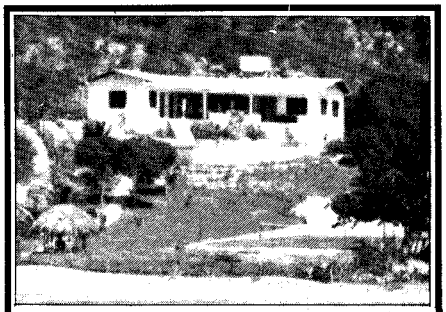

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Washington Diarist

Portents of Winter

The foliage was at its zenith last weekend in New Hampshire. Despite rain earlier in the week, the colors of autumn were overwhelming in their brilliance—the bright yellows of the birches, the reds and oranges, the sienna of the oaks and maples punctuated by the verdant greens of the pines and spruces. The effect was of fireworks at noon in the mellow yellow sun. That it would not last long was the bittersweetness of the scene. My innocent pleasure during that time was marred, however, because I had included in my weekend reading several books on Asia, a prelude to a contemplated trip there next month. One book especially, *Cambodia, Year Zero*, by Francois Ponchard (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) shattered the mood. I recalled other brilliant fireworks—in Cambodia in 1960—a scene above the royal palace, facing the confluence of the Tonle Sop and the Mekong. The occasion was the funeral ceremonies for King Norodom Sumararith, Prince Norodom Sihanouk's father. I had a choice view from the roof of our house on Ang Eng street, which overlooked the high west wall of the palace. All that lovely old city—described in the 1860s by French explorer Commander Legrée, for example, as he sought vainly for the river road to China—is effectively gone, as fragile, it turns out, as the leaves.

The evidence of mass murder in Ponchard's book, based on interviews with a thousand refugees in neighboring Thailand, is overwhelmingly convincing to everyone, with the possible exception of Professor Noam Chomsky. Ponchard in April 1975 witnessed the departure of the population of war-swollen Phnom Penh. Reasons of famine were given as the motivation of the mass movement. A Cambodian official said, according to Ponchard, "The city is bad for there is money in the city. People can be reformed, but not cities. By sweating to clear the land, sowing and harvesting crops, men will learn the real value of things. Man has to know that he is born from a grain of rice." The British Foreign Office this September released Foreign Policy Document Number 25, which had been submitted to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva last March. In July the Department of State submitted a 300-page report to the same commission, documenting the atrocities the Khmer Communist regime has committed against its own people. Conservative estimates are that 100,000 Cambodians have been executed and another two million are dead from overwork, malnutrition and mistreatment. During all this, Prime Minister Pol Pot has conceded that a few foreign spies and counterrevolutionaries have been killed. Even his Chinese mentors have tried to discourage the more sanguinary traits of the regime. On September 26, Mr. Pol broadcast the message that all refugees should return to Cambodia. "All Cambodians aboard, in general, do not wish to live in those foreign lands, but they stay there because they have been fooled by our enemies. If they want to return, no matter who they are, we will give them a cordial reception," he promised.

This speech came shortly after the almost paralyzed Lon Nol, the former military chief of the American-backed government in Cambodia, came like the ghost of Christmas past to Washington. In a broken, sobbing voice he made what was described as a "hopeless plea." Mr. Lon also made a courtesy call on Senator George McGovern, who earlier had been so shocked at the genocide in Cambodia that he had called for military intervention to "knock this regime out of power." To Lon Nol's plea for intervention, however, McGovern only nodded. A Department of State spokesman said that from the experience of the 1960s, "we've learned a lot about the level of appropriate US involvement." A book by William Shawcross on Cambodia and Henry Kissinger (to be published soon by Simon and Schuster) will remind us, again, how the Nixon administration used the hapless Cambodians as hostages to our policy in Vietnam. The appeals to the UN Human Rights Commission appear to be all that anyone intends to do at the moment about the plight of the Cambodian people. This demonstrates that the Carter administration's reliance on broad moralistic appeals and its neglect of traditional bilateral diplomacy produces feeble foreign policy. Would not efforts by the United States through the Chinese, Vietnamese, Thais and Malaysians, for example, be of some value in relieving this wretched situation?

In the meantime, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the former chief of state, has reappeared at an official banquet after an absence of three years. This was reported by Hsin Hau, the Chinese news agency. There is mild speculation here that the reemergence of Sihanouk, if that is what it is, might pave the way to changes in the composition of the Cambodian government, mainly because of Vietnamese military pressure on the eastern border. The fighting there in those almost forgotten places, like the Parrot's Beak, demonstrates once again the triumph of blood over ideology. On Sunday morning, shortly before we left New Hampshire, an enormous dark gray cloud appeared, wrapping itself around the sun, and a shadow and chill fell over the forest. It smelled of damp cold. Suddenly there were flurries of snow, and then hail that bounced off the earth like rock salt. And then the sun came out again and the wind sprang up and the leaves began falling from the trees.

The Canadian geese are coming into the Eastern Shore, as earlier reported by James Michener. The last of the east coast boat shows are bothering traffic in Annapolis. But these otherwise portentous events have sunk into journalistic insignificance because of the mysterious murder in the Bay. The victim, a former CIA official who was a member of CIA's office of Strategic Research, was found floating at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, unsuccessfully weighted down by two diving belts and with a bullet wound in the head. Murder or suicide? Some senators think he was murdered by the KGB and propose an investigation. If the JFK assassination is a standard, the Senate will reach a consensus in about fifteen years.

The CIA is not trying to cover up its role in the matter of high-priced Soviet defector Arkady Shevchenko, who bailed out of his $87,000-a-year UN post six months ago. He now receives his money from a "high CIA official" and has spent about $40,000 dawdling about the Caribbean with a hired girl friend. President Carter at his press conference said the amounts were exaggerated and would be, if true, "inflationary." The CIA spokesman said, "We are aware of what he is doing. What he does with his money is his business." It is nice to have a vote of confidence from time to time from your employer.

R. J. M.

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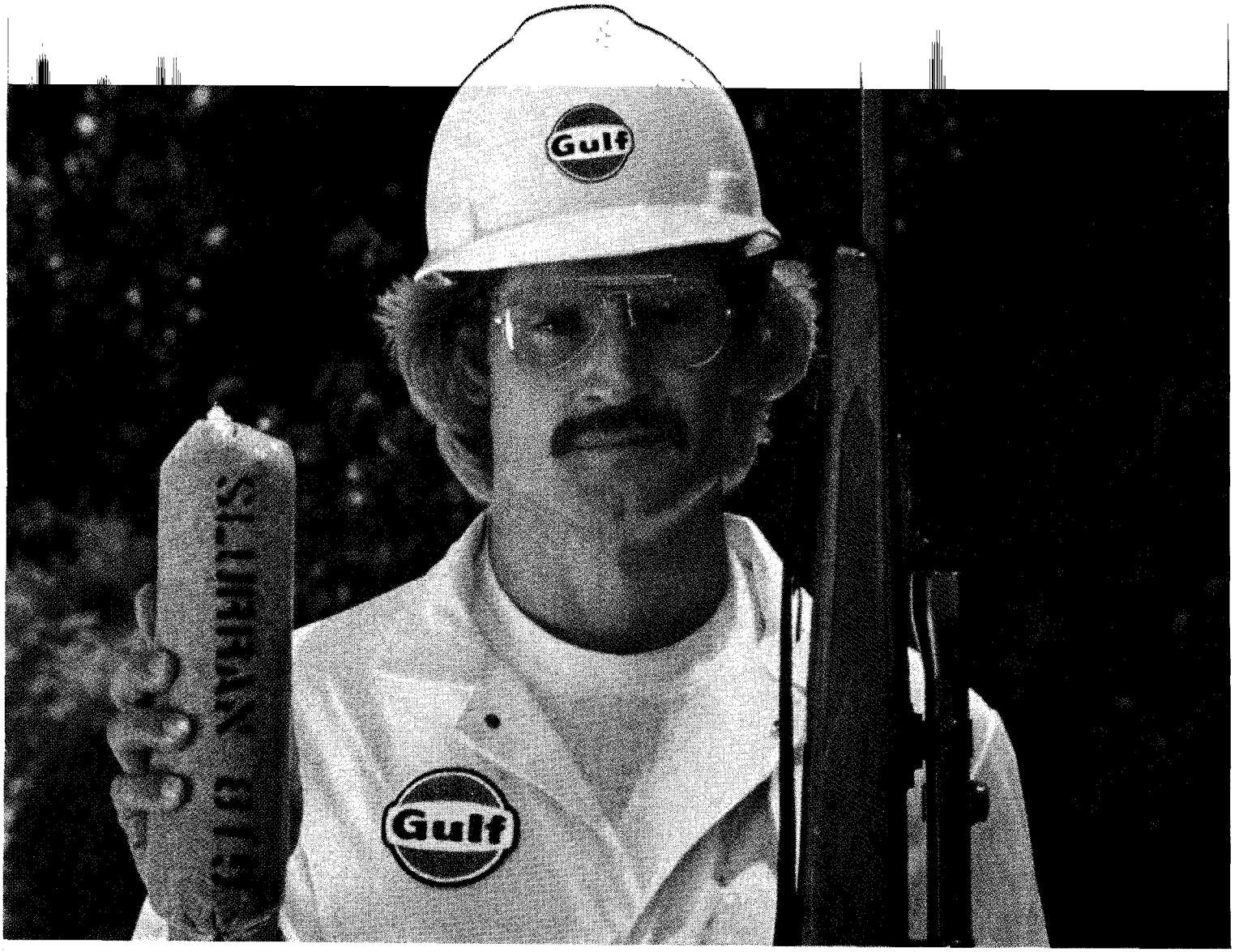

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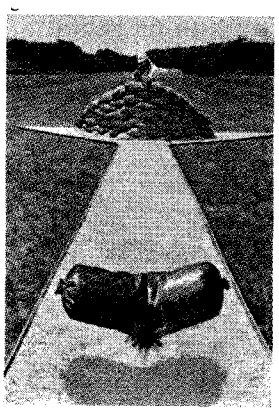

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